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PHILOSOPHICAL WORKS OF PETER CHAADAEV

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Wie schwer sind nicht die Mittel zu erwerben,
Durch die man zu den Quellen steigt!
Und eh' man nur den halben Weg erreicht,
Muss wohl ein armer Teufel sterben.

Faust. Part I

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PREFACE

Peter Chaadaev emerges from the pages of history as one of Russia's most provocative and influential thinkers. The purpose of this book is to present the reader with the first English translation of most of his philosophical writings.

During the first half of the nineteenth century Chaadaev incited a violent polemic concerning the historical significance of Russian culture. His ideas concerning Russia's real mission in the world still provoke controversy in the Soviet Union. In fact, no edition of most of his works has ever been published in the Soviet Union until the Gorbachev era. Our English translation with commentaries was done in the conviction that these writings should be made available to the English-reading public.

The background material in this book is expository; we have not attempted to write a complete biographical study of Chaadaev, nor have we tried to offer an analysis of Chaadaev's philosophy. The point of view is simply that of two scholars who admire Chaadaev's insights into philosophy in general, and the philosophy of history, in particular; so the background material has been limited to a biographical sketch of Chaadaev and a brief explanation of his major ideas. Since there was no definitive edition of Chaadaev's original works in print when this project was begun in 1961, a thorough search was made in the archives of Moscow and Leningrad. The extant manuscripts were studied and evaluated to determine as far as possible how Chaadaev himself would have wanted these works to appear in print, had he been able to publish them.

Utilizing the latest Soviet archival reference works, we were able to pinpoint the whereabouts of most of the Chaadaeviana. The manuscript collections in the Soviet Union provided us with further clues to other source materials. Having found the manuscripts, we had them microfilmed and began submitting them to tests to determine authenticity and relative reliability. We also tried to discover when each of the manuscripts had been written. We then concerned ourselves with the variants. In dealing with the manuscripts in which Chaadaev deleted whole passages and changed the working of the texts himself, we used two criteria: 1) What changes apparently represented Chaadaev's final choices? 2) If Chaadaev had had the opportunity of preparing most of his works for publication, which original of the variants would he, in all likelihood, have chosen? The admirable scholarly work done on the Chaadaev manuscripts by the late Dmitri Ivanovich Shakhovskoi was of invaluable aid to us in completing work. After having completed our work on the original manuscripts, we felt that they were important enough to be translated into English, especially in this era of *perestroika*. and *glasnost*, when a new Soviet edition of his works is due to appear. However, a word of warning seems in order here before this study begins: Chaadaev does not appeal to anyone in search of systematized, unified philosophical analyses. He did not contribute anything particularly original to the academic field of philosophy. His significance rests upon his peculiar application of a particular set of religious and philosophical ideas to the study of

Russia's place in history. In Chaadaev's mind, the problem of the historical significance of Russian culture revolved around a few specific questions which he formulated for the first time, and in a highly provocative manner: Does Russia belong to the East or to the West? Is Russian culture European or Asiatic? Does it belong to the Judaeo-Christian, Graeco-Roman world? What historical role have Russians played in the past? Have they contributed anything original to world culture? What should Russia's mission be in the present and in the future?

We should like to thank the Russian Research Center of Harvard University for making available to us the rich resources at Widener Library. The former Inter-University Committee on Travel Grants and the current International Research and Exchange Board (IREX) were generous in arranging several research trips to Russia. The American Philosophical Society (Penrose Fund) provided financial aid for microfilming and photostating source materials in Leningrad and Moscow, and the Academy of Sciences of the U.S.S.R. kindly permitted access to the source materials. We wish to acknowledge the support we received in our research from Boston College and the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Special thanks go to the Centre d'Etudes Russes at Meudon,where the Bibliothèque Slave is located with its rich archival resources. We should like to express our gratitude to Mrs. Karen Potterton for typing the text. We are deeply grateful to the late Professor Thomas Blakeley for his helpful editorial assistance. It is our pleasure to dedicate this book in his memory.

TRANSLATORS' NOTE

The translations of Chaadaev's 'Philosophical Letters' and 'Apologia of a Madman' are based on the complete edition of those original texts written in French by Chaadaev and first published by Raymond T. McNally in *Forschungen zur osteuropäischen Geschichte,* Band 11, Berlin, 1966, 24-129.

The translations of the fragments, other articles, and letters are largely based on the first edition of these by Raymond McNally, François Rouleau and Richard Tempest in *Pierre Tchaadaev, Oeuvres inédites ou Rares,* Centre d'Etudes Russes, Meudon, France, 1990 or on the Gershenzon edition as specified in the notes and commentaries. The translations have tended towards the literal rather than the literary, wherever possible.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

In 1836 the Moscow journal *Telescope* published Peter Chaadaev's 'First Philosophical Letter'. Chaadaev had written it as an introduction to his highly critical evaluation of contemporary philosophy, religion, Russian history and culture. The government considered the publication to be extremely dangerous to public order and immediately ordered the confiscation of all copies of the journal in which Chaadaev's article appeared. The tsarist officials exiled the editor of the journal to Siberia, dismissed the censor responsible for approving publication from his post, forbade even the mention of Chaadaev's name in the daily press, and extracted a promise from the author that he would never try to publish anything again. The tsar then chose a singular method to deal with Chaadaev. Rather than send him into the usual Siberian exile, the tsar declared that Chaadaev was officially insane! Chaadaev, until then a comparatively unknown drawing-room philosopher, became the notorious author of a work which the government considered dangerous enough to suppress. Immediately the journal containing his article was in great demand by local bookdealers who were not averse to selling proscribed literature under the counter. Many Russians reasoned that if the work was worth repressing, it had to be worth reading. Hundreds of copies of Chaadaev's suppressed 'First Philosophical Letter' were made by hand and circulated in manuscript form throughout the salons of Petersburg and Moscow. Chaadaev's article generated a heated polemic among his contemporary Russian intellectuals.

But the true irony of the so-called "*Telescope* Affair" lay less in the overt events themselves than in the fact that Chaadaev was officially not allowed to publish the rest of his works which would have clarified the nuances of his intellectual convictions. His 'First Philosophical Letter' had been designed merely as a provocative beginning to a long work entitled *Philosophical Letters Addressed to a Lady*, containing eight letters in all. Furthermore, the 'First Philosophical Letter', though published in 1836, represented Chaadaev's initial point of view around 1829, when he had written it. But from 1829 to 1836 Chaadaev had undergone an evolution in thinking which was to culminate in the *Apologia of a Madman* and to continue during the forties and early fifties in other writings, some of which circulated in manuscript form. In order to understand the background of Chaadaev's statements in his writings, it may be helpful for the reader to know the important events in his lifetime, one filled with many subtle intellectual modifications in reaction to a rapidly changing world.[1]

Peter Iakovlevich Chaadaev was born around the year 1794 either in Moscow or in the Nizhnyi-Novgorod region.[2] His family belonged to the old Russian gentry. Most of his forefathers had been officers or administrators. Peter's mother was the daughter of the famous historian, Prince Mikhail M. Shcherbatov. The Shcherbatovs could trace their lineage back to old Kievan times.[3] His father's family had come from Lithuania and centuries ago had

ultimately descended from Tatars, perhaps even from Ghengis Khan himself. Peter's father died in 1795 and his mother in 1797.[4] An unmarried sister of Peter's mother, Princess Anna Mikhailovna Shcherbatova, took care of the orphan and his elder brother Mikhail.

As a member of the Russian gentry Peter Chaadaev was brought up in the most privileged class in Russian society. Russian rulers had traditionally called upon the gentry for service to the state. But in the course of the eighteenth century the attempted vigorous absolutism of Peter the Great had given way to the emancipation of the gentry from compulsory state service in 1762 and corporate privileged status in 1785.

The French revolution caused Russian monarchs to rethink the implications of any further "Westernization" of Russian society. During his short reign Paul I tried to curb the privileges of the gentry and bring them under his power but was largely unsuccessful. Alexander I had to reverse the trend of his predecessor in order to seek the support of the gentry in his plans for Russia. But the same acts which had given new status to the gentry as the only comparatively independent class in Russian society had also, in effect, eliminated the justification for one of the socio-economic factors upon which that status rested, namely, the possession of serfs. No longer could serfdom be justified upon the need to compensate the gentry as a class for obligatory service to the state. Though many of the gentry were interested in preserving serfdom even under these circumstances, a group within the gentry desired a change in the old order, even if this meant their loss of status as members of that very gentry. Some, such as Alexander Radishchev, had been imbued with the ideals of the enlightenment; others, such as Chaadaev, became motivated by religious and reformist-conservative ideals. But all shared a common attachment to Western- European culture, though each understood it in a different way. All were outfitted with a Western-European education. Chaadaev's early upbringing influenced his early orientation in this direction.

While he was still a youth, Western-European tutors were brought in to instruct him and his brother in their Moscow dwellings. His uncle, Dmitri Shcherbatov, chose these teachers from the professors at Moscow University: Professor Christian von Schloezer (1774-1831), son of the eminent German historian August von Schloezer, and Gottlieb von Bühle (1763-1821), professor of philosophy at Moscow University. Peter showed an early, marked interest in his studies and began to collect a special library of his own. Local Moscow bookdealers came to know him well; at the age of fourteen he corresponded with Didot in Paris about rare books.[5] Around 1808 Peter Chaadaev entered the University of Moscow. His nephew-biographer, Mikhail Zhikharev, describes him at that age as already well-read, well-educated, and gifted with a unique way of expressing his thoughts.[6] Chaadaev spent three years at the university. In particular, Professor von Bühle continued to expose Chaadaev to the works and ideas of Kant, Fichte, and Schelling. Chaadaev also attended the lectures of another of his former tutors, Professor von Schloezer, and those of Professor

Kachenovski; both of these scholars represented the school of Russian "historical scepticism". Chaadaev's university friends included the writer and satirist Alexander Griboedov, his cousin Ivan Shcherbatov, who was to be implicated in the Semenovsky uprising of 1820, and the future Decembrist revolutionaries Nikolai Turgenev, Nikita Muraviev, and Ivan Iakushkin.

As Napoleon threatened Russia in 1812, Chaadaev left Moscow University to join the army as a cadet officer in the illustrious Semenovskii regiment. He fought in such battles as Borodino, Pirma, Lützen, and Leipzig; in the battle of Kulm, Chaadaev won the Anna Order, Fourth Class, as well as the Iron Cross. On April 1, 1814, he rode into Paris among the triumphant Russian troops which came to invest that city. Chaadaev was accepted into a Masonic lodge and received the first two Masonic degrees.[7] After his arrival in Paris, he transferred from the Semenovskii to the Akhtyrskii regiment and was put in the Guard unit.

Upon his return to Russia in 1816, Chaadaev was promoted to the rank of cornet in the Hussar Guard Regiment, stationed at Tsarskoe Selo, near St. Petersburg. There began his intimate friendship with Russia's greatest poet, Alexander Pushkin. Pushkin considered the elder Chaadaev as his mentor and dedicated several poems to the philosopher. Chaadaev's other friends at this time included many of his old colleagues from student days at Moscow University; Alexander Griboedov, Ivan Iakushkin, Nikolai Turgenev, and the Muraviev-Apostol brothers. In December 1817, Chaadaev moved to St. Petersburg. There he became aide-de-camp to Prince Illarion Vasilchikov, commander of the Guard Corps. In that same year Chaadaev was promoted to the rank of captain. In St. Petersburg he moved in the upper circles of Russian society. Chaadaev also belonged to various Masonic lodges in St. Petersburg, but by 1818 he foresook this passing fancy, just as some of his friends did about that time. He had reached the eighth degree of the lodge "Amis Réunis" which was soon to be suppressed.[8]

In 1820 the revolt of the Semenovskii regiment occasioned a change in Chaadaev's career.[9] As one of the aides-de-camp to the Corps Commander, Chaadaev was sent to Troppau, in order to relay information to Tsar Alexander about the Semenovskii revolt. Soon after this Chaadaev retired from military service. His request to be released from duty was accepted only after the police who kept close watch on all the "liberals", opened Chaadaev's mail and found some remarks which showed that Chaadaev treated the favors of the emperor and of Vasilchikov in rather cavalier fashion.[10] In March, 1821, Chaadaev left military service for good. Part of the next two quiet years was spent on his aunt's estate near Moscow and part in the city itself.

On July 6, 1823, Chaadaev left Russian for Western Europe on a trip which was to last three years. He visited London, Brighton, Paris, Florence, Venice, Verona, Rome, Munich, and Karlsbad. Along the way Chaadaev visited local bookdealers in his efforts to build up his personal library. Upon his return he was detained at the Russian border. His name had been linked with the members of the Decembrist revolt of 1825. During the lengthy investigation of

August, 1826, Chaadaev did not deny his acquaintance with the leading Decembrists, but he could not have taken any active part in the 1825 uprising, since he had been absent from Russia since 1823. The customs inspectors found numerous "forbidden" books among his luggage.[11] Only after a thorough examination was he allowed to proceed to Moscow.

Chaadaev retreated completely from society. Many of his old friends who had been members of the ill-fated Decembrist uprising were in exile or in prison. In this period of seclusion from 1827 to 1831 Chaadaev produced his longest work, the eight 'Philosophical Letters'. Near his aunt's estate outside Moscow resided one of his few friends at the time, a young noblewoman, Ekaterina Dmitrievna Panova, whom Chaadaev had met in 1827. She and Chaadaev had engaged in discussions about religion and philosophy. In 1828 Chaadaev left his aunt's estate and returned to Moscow. Madame Panova and her husband also went to Moscow about the same time, and the discussions between Madame Panova and Chaadaev continued. In an undated letter she asked for Chaadaev's advice about her religious problems. He began writing what was ostensibly a reply to her but in reality he devised the letter itself simply as a literary vehicle, the first in the series of 'Philosophical Letters' designed to express his views on Russian history and culture.

Handwritten copies of some of these letters became known to select members of Russian society. As early as the beginning of 1830 some of the letters were read and discussed in the literary circles of Moscow.[12] At the Sverbeev salon Chaadaev himself read two of his 'Philosophical Letters'.[13] Meanwhile the news of the July Revolution of 1830 in Paris caused Chaadaev to modify several of his ideas on Western-European political trends.[14] In 1831 Chaadaev's doctor encouraged him to move about actively in society again. He joined the English Club, one of the most select clubs in Moscow.

Chaadaev sought Pushkin's help in finding a publisher for his 'Philosophical Letters'. Pushkin's letter of July 6, 1831, to Chaadaev indicates that Pushkin had opened up discussions with the French bookseller Bellizard about the matter.[15] But nothing came of this attempt. In 1832 Chaadaev attempted to have parts from two of his 'Philosophical Letters' (Letters VI and VII) accepted for publication by the Moscow publishing house of A. Simon.[16] The ecclesiastical censors forbade publication of the works. Near the end of 1833 he took up permanent residence in the large home of one of his acquaintances, the Levashovs, on the New Basmannaia street in Moscow. He was to reside there the rest of his life. Each Monday a literary circle gathered at his apartment. Around 1835 or 1836 Chaadaev tried again to have at least two of his 'Philosophical Letters' published in the newly founded *Moskovskii Nabliudatel.* There was also the possibility that 'The First Philosophical Letter' would be published in that journal, as well. However, the editor wanted some changes made in the text: all references to Russia and "we" were to be deleted and in their place the words "certain people" should be written. Chaadaev

refused to do this.[17] In 1836 he sent a manuscript to Paris in the hopes that it might be published by a French journal. But this also never materialized.

Chaadaev also gave copies of the 'Philosophical Letters' to the famous university professor Nikolai Nadezhdin, editor of the journal *Telescope*. Apparently Chaadaev did not think that 'The First Philosophical Letter' would be published; however, when the censor passed on it, Chaadaev considered this an act of Providence. Nadezhdin's magazine *Telescope* was headed for financial ruin. Nadezhdin felt that the publication of 'The First Philosophical Letter' would create a literary sensation.[18] It did, as we have seen.[19] The furor about 'The First Philosophical Letter' continued well into the 1830's. Popular discussion about it broke out, even in fairly public circles in Moscow.[20] Like most of the Russians of his day, the poet Zhukovskii criticized Chaadaev's point of view.[21] But at least two Russian intellectuals recognized the 'First Philosophical Letter' as an expression of true patriotism: Lermontov and Herzen. Lermontov felt that Chaadaev would be honored by posterity which would declare that "he loved his native land".[22] The most famous enthusiastic reception of the 'First Philosophical Letter' came from Alexander Herzen while he was in Viatka.[23]

No later than February, 1837, Chaadaev received some of his personal papers back from the government, and by October 30, 1837, the political and medical surveillance had ceased upon orders from the tsar.[24] But the seven other letters in the series of "Philosophical Letters" remained unpublished during Chaadaev's lifetime, as did his *Apologia of a Madman*, and his other writings.

Chaadaev had to content himself in the 1840's with the role of *salon* preacher-philosopher. During this period he became friendly with Alexander Herzen who had come back to live in Moscow from 1840 to 1847. He also continued his acquaintance with many of the leading Slavophils and Westernizers. He heard Iurii Samarin defend his doctoral thesis in the halls of Moscow University. Samarin tried to justify Orthodoxy by a new Hegelian argumentation. Chaadaev objected to the attempt, though he admired Samarin's talents. Chaadaev also attended Granovskii's lectures on the glories of the Middle Ages which he began to read at Moscow University in the academic year 1843-1844 and continued in 1844-45. He was present at Shevyrev's lectures on the literary glories of the Russian past in 1844-45. The revolution of 1848 had a strong effect on Chaadaev's political philosophy.[25] When the Crimean War broke out in 1854 Chaadaev was able to see the ominous fulfillment of his prophecies; the Russian cultural isolationism of Nicholas I had led to misunderstanding and war between Russia and Western Europeans.

On the Saturday before Easter, April 14/26, 1856, Peter Chaadaev became ill in the afternoon. He was given Holy Communion and at four o'clock he had an attack of apoplexy from which he never recovered.[26] He received a Christian burial and was interred at the Don Monastery, as he himself had requested.[27]

The most interesting epitaph on Chaadaev's life was written by one of his major opponents, the Slavophil Aleksei Khomiakov:

> Almost all of us knew Chaadaev, many loved him, and perhaps he was not as dear to anyone so much as to those who considered themselves to be his opponents. An educated mind, artistic feeling, noble heart - these were the characteristics which attracted everyone to him, and at that very time when thought apparently became immersed in a terrible and involuntary dream, he was especially dear to them, because he himself kept awake and awakened others - because in the thickening twilight of that period he did not let the lantern die out and played that game which is known by the name: "The Man's Himself Again!" There are epochs in which such a game is in itself a great service. Even dearer was he to his own friends by an undefinable sadness which accompanied the quickening of his lively mind.... How can one explain his renown? He was not a public figure, but, nevertheless, the name of Chaadaev was known by almost all educated people, both in Petersburg and in a large part of the Russian provinces, even though they did not even have any direct contact with him.[28]

Finally, what the great English historian Thomas Macaulay wrote in his essay about Machiavelli could equally be applied to Chaadaev:

> It is difficult to conceive any situation more painful than that of a great man, condemned to watch the lingering agony of an exhausted country, to tend it during alternate fits of stupefaction and raving which precede its dissolution, and to see the symptoms of vitality disappear one by one, till nothing is left but coldness, darkness and corruption.... His enthusiasm, barred from the career which it would have selected for itself, seems to have found a vent in desperate levity.

AN ANALYSIS OF CHAADAEV'S MAJOR IDEAS

Too many writers have tried to see more in Chaadaev's work than is actually there.[1] Peter Chaadaev was simply a religious, social, and cultural utopian thinker. He had an *idée fixe*. It was the realization of the "kingdom of God" on earth, the eventual integration of philosophy and religion and then of all mankind into one universal, Christian social and cultural system. His "kingdom of God" was not in the next world but in this one. It did not lie beyond but *in* history. But though Chaadaev was a utopian, he was not a mystic.[2] He continually emphasized the importance of establishing proper material conditions in society, in order for men to progress towards this goal. A Romantic fascination with Western-European culture, particularly that of the Middle Ages, led him to an admiration of what he thought to be the historical influence of the Roman Church upon Christian culture. However, he was in no sense wholly satisfied with any of the Christian churches. His "social system" or "church," as he called it, was to be one of the future, a truly universal organization capable of uniting all mankind. From these convictions flowed all his interpretations of the meaning of history. History to Chaadaev, is not the narration of the battles and reigns of kings, nor is it a chronicle of all that happened in the past. True history is the result of the meditations of philosopher-historians upon the religious and cultural implications behind the overt events of the past. The historian must not only describe, he must also evaluate. Chaadaev's own particular criterion for judging historical phenomena is based upon whether they aided or hindered realization of his ideal of unity. He believed in historical progress, but, like Guizot, Chaadaev modified the strict rationalist view of it. Instead of depending upon a "natural" ability of the individual's critical faculties, human reason, Chaadaev put his trust in the winnowing process of time. The endurance and recurrence of certain ideas in human history give men clues to the nature of human destiny itself. Men have always striven to achieve social unity and complete intellectual, cultural, and religious integration, hence this motif must be a basic drive in the historical development of mankind. In the past the most important persons were those who prepared men for the gradual acceptance of this ideal. In general, Chaadaev rated religious leaders and moralists above philosophers, since he considered that they had done more to raise the collective moral norms of humanity than most philosophers ever had. He favored such charismatic spiritual leaders as Moses, David, Epicurus, Christ, and Mohammed. By combatting the polytheism and multiplicity of moral codes in their day these reformers paved the way for the unification of mankind. He favored the philosophical ideas of Fichte, Kant, and Schelling and understood them better than many of their fellow German philosophers. Concerning the study of Russian history Chaadaev simply contributed to a growing critical attitude towards the Russian past which was developing among some of the Russian intellectual circles of his day.[3] In his comparisons between the Western-

European religio-cultural complex and the Russian one he pointed up, first of all, the serious defects and weaknesses in the latter. In the midst of the nationalistic bombast of Official Nationalism under the aegis of Nicholas I Chaadaev's dissenting voice stood out.[4] He insisted that all Russian claims to greatness be compared with the cultural contributions of Western Europe. He found Russia wanting. He objected most strongly to all the super-patriots who were trying to create a Russian superiority complex out of the dust of Russia's past. Russians, he felt, could never really be content with their past, simply because they have never even become conscious of the true meaning of it all.

Chaadaev presented the following arguments to prove that Russians were devoid of genuine historical consciousness: Russian history itself had no organic development. It had no intellectual or cultural continuity. The "history" of Russia was nothing but a series of illogical breaks with the past - from barbarism to foreign oppression to self-inflicted slavery. There were no conscious links among the past phases of Russian history. The reason for this lacuna was that Russians had never been motivated by a great, universal spiritual ideal. They acted only out of local motives of caprice or of violence. Whatever culture had come to Russia had been imposed from the outside. The advent of Byzantine Christianity in Russia brought with it a Christian culture in the Kievan period but a narrowly confined one with a church which lacked the needed independence from civil authority. The Mongol Yoke which followed had cut off any contact with the flourishing Christian culture in the West. Despite attempts to gain contact with the West in the Muscovite period, Russia remained basically isolated and backward. While Western Europe was moving ahead through the "glorious" cultural achievements of the High Middle Ages and Renaissance, Russia made no contributions of world import. While serfdom began to be abolished in the West, in Russia serfdom increased. Furthermore, while Western Europeans took to the seas to spread their culture all the way to the New World and to the Far East, Russians remained landlocked and parochial and merely expanded geographically to the Oder and to the Bering Straits by means of force and sheer massivity.

It was Peter the Great who first attempted to make the Russians into an historically-minded people by linking them up with the mainstream of human history, namely, European history. Since Russia was a *tabula rasa*, Peter encountered no great conscious opposition to his reforms. The fact that Peter's reorientation of Russian society lasted after his death and continued apace proved, in Chaadaev's mind, that there could have been no survival of any supposedly "glorious" Russian past which could have formed the basis for sustained resistance to Westernization.

However, though Chaadaev wanted further cultural relations between Western Europe and Russia, he did not fail to see that Russia represented essentially a unique entity apart from Western Europe. Long before Herzen or the Slavophils, Chaadaev insisted on the idea that Russia was different from the West and that she could not simply take over Western institutions or way of life,

since she did not enjoy the conditions out of which the Western institutions and way developed. Like Karamzin, Chaadaev distinguished between the West, Western Europe, on the one hand, and the East, the Byzantine and Asian sphere, on the other, with Russia in between.[5] But though, in Chaadaev's mind, Russia was not a full member of the Western-European cultural complex, yet he felt that she was closer to the European rather than the Asian world.

Chaadaev does not fit into the Slavophil-Westernizer dichotomy.[6] First of all, he continued to exchange ideas and maintain contact with both groups throughout his life but belonged to neither camp. Secondly, his peculiar admiration for the historical influence of the Roman Church was not shared by either Slavophils or Westernizers. Thirdly, his interest in a new Christian universal socio-cultural organization placed him outside the movements. Unlike most Westernizers, Chaadaev did not approve of the political and social trends in the Europe of his day. He did not look forward to a Russia imbued with the liberal ideas of constitutionalism and secularism, the hope of many Westernizers. He was opposed to the July Revolution of Louis Philippe in 1830 and against the 1848 Revolution in France which brought Louis Napoleon to power. In a lengthy polemical section of the *Apologia of a Madman* Chaadaev formulated part of the basic Slavophil position long before they themselves had formulated their stand. Chaadaev agreed with the Slavophil emphasis upon religion as the basis of all culture, but he disagreed with their estimate of Russian orthodoxy.[7] Furthermore, he took great exception to their evaluation of the role of Peter the Great in Russian history.[8]

It should be clear even to the cursory reader of these documents that in the *Apologia of a Madman* and in his other later writings Chaadaev did not retract the critical views which he had expressed in the 'Philosophical Letters'. In fact, he was often more pessimistic about Russia's past than in the 'Philosophical Letters'. Russia did indeed have a meaningful "history", but only since the time of Peter the Great, only since the concerted assimilation of Western-European culture. But there was a shift in emphasis between the 'Philosophical Letters' and his subsequent writings. The lack of any conscious historical past in Russia which Chaadaev had envisioned as a definite weakness in the 'Philosophical Letters' became a possible source of future greatness. In Chaadaev's mind, it all depended upon whether Russians could be made to acknowledge the dearth of their past and in what way they would react to that awareness. In his opinion Russians were indeed an exceptional people in that they seemed not to belong to any of the great cultural currents of history; they appeared destined only to provide some "terrible lesson" for the rest of mankind. The main lesson to be learned from Russian history was precisely what not to do. Chaadaev argued that Russians should not rationalize away sterile Byzantine ritualism, the Tatar influence on Russian politics and culture, Ivan the Terrible, the knout, serfdom and Siberian exile. Russia was culturally and intellectually backward. But there could even be an advantage to this backwardness. For Russia was not simply two hundred years behind Western Europe; she was different. She could not and

need not try to repeat the history of Western Europe at a fast rate, in order to attempt to catch up with the West. Russia's rulers also needed not to repeat the West's mistakes but only follow the example of Peter the Great in continuing assimilating the beneficial aspects from the Western- European religious and cultural heritage and rejecting the adverse elements of it, then, unburdened by the contemporary nationalist petty jealousies of the West, Russia could emerge - but only under those conditions - as a new spiritual center for a rejuvenated Europe. A close cultural exchange among all the European nations and Russia could then and only then lead closer to the great apocalyptic synthesis, the kingdom of God on earth, the intellectual, moral, and cultural unification of all mankind. This was Chaadaev's grand dream. But Chaadaev found no disciples in the Russians of his day to pursue his dream. Like most dreams, the significance of this one lay less in the possibilities of its realization than the deep-seated motives which it uncovered. Chaadaev's motivation is clear. He definitely takes his place among those thinkers who reject the Russian tendency towards nationalistic chauvinism and isolationism from Europe and advocate not a wall between Russia and Europe, but renewed contact within the common cultural context. In a real sense, Chaadaev was not just a Russian writer; he was a European.

If Chaadaev's attitude lived on in the twentieth century it was partially embodied in some of the ideas of Leon Trotsky, of course, without Chaadaev's religious convictions. Trotsky, like Marx before him, felt that Russia was indeed a special case but that it still had something to learn from Western Europe. Specifically Marx had held that only if the Russian agrarian revolution were complemented by a Western-European proletariat one, could Russia fulfill the historical task of building a socialist society. Like Marx, Trotsky felt that if the Russian revolution failed to spread to Western Europe, then Russia would not achieve socialism. Russia would be forced to imitate the old bourgeois ways and could not avoid the capitalist stage of history. Chaadaev's prophecy was somewhat similar: if Russians persist in trying to foster some fake exclusivistic nationalism, which aims at separating them from their European neighbors, then they will not fulfill their special destiny. Chaadaev saw that unfortunately happening under Tsar Nicholas I, and later Trotsky lived to witness an even more virulent form under Stalin. Today the spectre of a return to the exclusivist nationalism of Stalinism still haunts the Soviet Union. As Soviet intellectuals begin to grope openly for a new philosophy, and their Western counterparts attempt to understand that quest, it is not surprising that many find Chaadaev's main message relevant: Russians must continually evaluate their achievements in comparison with those of the West, for Russians and Westerners still have a great deal to learn from one another.

THE PHILOSOPHICAL LETTERS ADDRESSED TO A LADY

LETTER I

Adveniat regnum tuum

Madame,

It is your frankness and your sincerity that I love and respect most of all. Imagine, then, how much your letter surprised me! These amiable qualities in you charmed me from the moment I met you; they led me to talk to you about religion. Everything in your environment constrained me to remain silent. So imagine once again my astonishment when I received your letter.[1] Madame, that is all I can say to you about the opinion which you presume that I have formed about your character. Let us drop the subject and proceed at once to the serious portion of your letter.

First, what is the source of this intellectual disturbance which perturbs and fatigues you so, you say, even to the point of impairing your health? Could this then be the unfortunate result of our conversations? The emotion newly-awakened in your heart should have brought you calm and peace; instead it has caused you some anxiety, scruples, almost feelings of remorse. But should I be surprised at that? It is the natural effect of that disastrous condition which encroaches upon all hearts and minds in our country. You merely yielded to the influence of forces which dominate everything here from the highest strata of society to the slave who exists only for the pleasure of his master.

Besides, how could you have rebuffed it? The traits which distinguish you from the crowd must also render you particularly susceptible to the noxious effects of the air which you breathe. Could the little which I have allowed myself to say to you bring stability to your ideas amid all that surrounds you? Could I purify the atmostphere in which we live? I should have anticipated the results, and, in fact, I did anticipate them. That was the reason for those frequent hesitations which were hardly likely to bring conviction into your soul and which must have naturally bewildered you. Besides, if I had not been convinced that, no matter what troubles it may cause in your heart, a partially awakened religious feeling is better than complete lethargy I would have been forced to regret my zeal. But these clouds which overcast your sky today will be dispersed one day, I hope, into redeeming dew which will impregnate the seed sown in your heart, and the effect which some insignificant words have produced upon you is my assurance of the greater effects which your own intellectual work will certainly produce as a result. Madame, surrender yourself without fear to the emotions which the religious ideas will summon within you; only pure feelings can issue from this pure source.

As for external matters, be content for the time being with the knowledge that only the teaching founded upon the supreme principle of unity and of the direct transmission of truth by an uninterrupted succession of its ministers can be the one most in accord with the true spirit of religion; for it is epitomized in the idea of the fusion of all the moral forces upon the earth into a simple thought, into a simple sentiment, and in the gradual establishment of a social system or church, which must make truth reign among men. Every other teaching, by the sole fact of its separation from the original doctrine, wholly rejects the effect of this sublime invocation of the Savior: "My father, I pray that they may be one as we are one"[2], and does not want God's reign upon earth. But from this it does not follow that you are bound to profess this truth before the world; that is certainly not your vocation. On the contrary, the very principle from which this truth is derived obliges you, in view of your position in society, to look upon this truth as an inner beacon for your faith, and nothing more. I consider myself fortunate to have contributed to turning your thoughts towards religion, but I would feel very wretched, Madame, if at the same time I may have caused your conscience perplexities which, in the long run, could only make your faith grow cold.

I believe I told you once that the best way of preserving religious feeling is to observe all the practices prescribed by the Church. This exercise in submission which contains more than is commonly imagined, and which the greatest minds have imposed upon themselves after conscious reflection, is a true worship of God. Nothing strengthens the spirit in its faith as the strict performance of all the obligations which are attached to it. Moreover, most of the rites in the Christian religion which emanate from the Supreme Reason are a truly life-giving force for one who knows how to embrace the truths which they express. There is only one exception to this otherwise perfectly general rule, and that is when one finds in oneself beliefs which elevate the soul to the very source of all our certitude, yet which do not contradict but, rather, support popular beliefs; then, and only then, is it permissible to neglect external observance, in order to devote oneself better to more important works. But woe to him who mistakes the illusions of his conceit, the deceptions of his reason, for extraordinary revelations exempting him from the general law! Madame, how can you do better than clothe yourself in that gown of humility which so well becomes your sex? It is, believe me, what can best calm your troubled soul and pour some sweetness into your life.

For a woman whose cultivated mind can find charm in study and in the serious emotions of meditation, is there , I ask you, a way of life more natural than that which is somewhat serious and devoted in large part to the thought and practice of religion even from the standpoint of worldly ideas? In your reading, you say, nothing touches your imagination as scenes from the lives of tranquil and serene persons; scenes which, like that of a beautiful countryside at close of day, calm the soul and remove us for a moment from a painful or insipid reality. Well, these are not fantasies ; it depends entirely upon you to make one of these

charming fictions real; you have all the necessary requirements for it. You see that I do not preach a very austere morality. It is in your inclinations, in the most pleasant dreams of your imagination that I propose to find that which can bring peace into your soul.

There is a certain aspect of man's life which bears no relationship to physical being but which pertains to his intellectual existence; it must not be disregarded; there is a diet for the soul just as there is one for the body; one must learn to submit to it. That is an old truth, I know, but I believe that very often it still has all the merits of an innovation in our country. One of the most deplorable things in our unique civilization is that we are still beginning to discover truths which are trite elsewhere - even among people less advanced than we in certain respects. That follows from the fact that we have never advanced along with other people; we are not related to any of the great human families; we belong neither to the West nor to the East, and we possess the traditions of neither. Placed, as it were, outside of the times, we have not been affected by the universal education of mankind. This admirable interconnection of human ideas throughout the passing centuries, this history of the human spirit which led men to the position which they occupy in the rest of the world today, had no effect upon us. What has long since constituted the very basis of social life in other lands is still only theory and speculation for us. And, I really must say it to you, Madame, you who are so fortunately disposed to gather all that is good and true on earth and to neglect nothing which affords the sweetest and purest joys of the soul, what have you accomplished, I ask you, with all these advantages? You are still looking not for something to fill up your life, but merely your day. You lack the very things which form the necessary framework of life elsewhere, where all the daily events are ordered so naturally, a condition as indispensable for a wholesome, moral existence as fresh air is for healthy, physical existence. You realize that I am not yet referring either to moral principles or to philosophical maxims but simply to a well-ordered life, to those habits and those patterns of the intellect, which provide leisure for the mind and impose a regular movement upon the soul.

Look around you. Don't you think we are all very restless? We all resemble travellers. There is no definite sphere of existence for anyone, no good habits, no rule for anything at all; not even a home; nothing which attracts or awakens our sympathy or affection, nothing lasting, nothing enduring; everything departs, everything flows away, leaving no traces either without or within ourselves. In our houses we seem to be camping; in our families we look like strangers; in our cities we look like nomads, even more than the nomads who let their herds graze on our steppes, for they are more attached to their deserts than we to our cities. And do not think for a moment that this is something unimportant. Poor souls that we are, let us not add ignorance of ourselves to our other afflictions, and let us not aspire to the life of pure intelligences; rather let us learn how to live sensibly within our given situation. But first let us talk some more about our country; this will not lead us away from

our subject. Without this preamble you could not understand what I have to say to you.

Every nation has its period of stormy agitation, of passionate restlessness, of activity without conscious motivation. During that time men are physically and intellectually wanderers in the world. This is the age of great passions, great emotions, great national undertakings. People are then vehemently aroused, without any apparent object but not without benefit for future generations. Each society has undergone these periods. They furnish them with their most vivid recollections, their myths, their poetry, all their strongest and most productive ideas. These are necessary bases of society. Otherwise societies would not have anything within their memory to which they could cling, anything which they could cherish; they would merely cling to the dust of their soil. This interesting epoch in a people's history is the adolescence of the people. It is the moment in which their faculties develop most powerfully, and their memory of it constitutes the joy and edification of the age of maturity. We, on the other hand, have nothing like that. First a brutal barbarism[3], then crude superstition[4], after that fierce, degrading foreign domination by strangers[5] whose spirit was later inherited by the national goverment[6] - that is the sad history of our youth. Our history experienced nothing remotely similar to this age of exuberant activity, this exalted play of the moral powers of the people. The epoch of our social life which corresponds to this moment was filled by a dull and somber existence without vigor and without energy, in which the only thing that animated us was crime, the only thing that pacified us was slavery. No charming memories and no gracious images live in our memory, no forceful lessons in our national tradition. Glance over all the centuries through which we have lived, all the land which we cover, you will find not one endearing object of remembrance, not one venerable monument which might evoke powerfully bygone eras and might vividly and colorfully depict them again for you. We live only in the most narrow kind of present without a past and without a future in the midst of a shallow calm. And if we stir sometimes, it is neither in the hope nor the desire for some common good, but with the puerile frivolity of the child who raises himself up and lifts his hands towards the rattle which the nurse shows to him.

Real human development in society cannot begin for any nation until life has become better organized, easier, sweeter than amid the incertitudes of this first epoch. As long as societies swing back and forth without convictions and without rules, even in routine matters, and as long as life is not organized, how can you expect the seeds of the good to take root? There persists the chaotic fermentation of things in the moral sphere, similar to the eruptions of the globe which preceded the present state of the planet. We are still at that stage.

Our early years, spent in immobile brutishness, have left no trace in our minds, and we do not have any individuality upon which to base our thoughts; but, isolated by a strange destiny from the universal development of humanity, we have absorbed nothing, not even traditional ideas of mankind. It is upon these ideas, however, that the life of people is based; it is from these ideas that

the future of people unfolds and from them comes their moral development. If we wish to take up a position similar to that of other civilized people, we must, in a certain sense, repeat the whole education of mankind. For this purpose we have the history of humanity and the results from the passing of the centuries before us. Undoubtedly this task is difficult, and it is not perhaps possible for a man to exhaust this vast subject, but, above all, it is necessary to realize the question involved: what is this education of the human race, what is the place which we occupy in the general order?

Peoples live only by the strong impressions which the past leaves upon their minds and by contact with other peoples. In this way, each individual senses his relationship to humanity as a whole. "What is the life of man worth", asks Cicero, "if the memory of past facts fails to succeed in integrating the present with the past?" But, as for us Russians, who have come into the world like illegitimate children without a heritage, without a link with the men who preceded us on earth, we possess within our hearts no teachings prior to our own existence. Each one of us must try individually to mend the rift broken within the family. What is habit and instinct in other people must be forced into our heads with hammer blows. Our memories do not go back beyond yesterday; we are, in a manner of speaking, strangers to our own selves. We move so peculiarly through time that, as we advance, each preceding moment escapes us irrevocably. This is a natural consequence of a culture based wholly upon importation and imitation. With us there is no inner development, no natural progression; new ideas sweep away the old, because they do not proceed from those old ones but come to us out of the blue. Since we only adopt ready-made ideas, the indelible characteristics which a movement of progressive ideas engraves upon men's minds and gives them power, does not even make an impression upon our intellects. We grow but we do not mature; we advance but in an oblique line, i.e., in a line which does not lead to any goal. We resemble children who have not been taught to think for themselves, and who, having become adults, have nothing of their own; all their knowledge lies on the surface of their existence, their whole soul exists outside themselves. That is our precise situation.

Peoples are moral beings just as individuals are. It takes centuries to educate them, just as it takes years to educate a person. In a sense, it can be said that we are an exceptional people. We are one of those nations which do not seem to form an integral part of humanity, but which exist only to teach some great lesson for the world. The lesson which we are destined to provide will assuredly not be lost, but who knows when we shall find ourselves once again amid humanity and how much misery we shall experience before the fulfillment of our destiny?

Europeans have a common physiognomy, a family resemblance. Despite the general division of these people into Latin and Teutonic branches, into the southern and the northern, there is a common bond which unites them in one whole, evident to anyone who has profoundly studied their history. You know that not very long ago all of Europe was called Christendom and this word had

its place in public law. Besides this general characteristic, each of these people has a particular characteristic, but all that is simply part of the history and tradition of each and forms the hereditary patrimony of ideas among these people. In Europe each individual enjoys his share of the heritage; without strain or work during his lifetime each collects and utilizes notions disseminated in society. Draw the comparison yourself and see what elementary ideas we can acquire in this way during our daily lives, in order to use them, for better or worse, in molding our lives. And note that this is not a question of study or reading, nor has it anything to do with literature or science; it is simply the contact of intellects; in the crib the child is imbued with these ideas which surround him amid his games, and are communicated to him by his mother's caresses; finally, under the form of diverse emotions these ideas permeate the marrow of his bones along with the air which he breathes and have formed his moral being even before he is sent out into the world and society. So you want to know what these ideas are? They are the ideas of duty, justice, law, and order. They originate in the very events which have built up society; they are the integral elements in the social world of these countries. This is the atmosphere of the West; it is more than history, more than psychology; it is the physiology of the European. What have you to substitute for that in our country?

I do not know whether or not we can draw any universal conclusions from what I have just said and thus arrive at some absolute principle, but it is obvious that, when a nation's thoughts cannot be connected with any set of ideas gradually and progressively developed in society, and when its participation in the general movement of the human spirit was confined to a blind, superficial, often awkward imitation of other nations, then this strange situation must powerfully influence the spirit of each individual in that nation. As a result, you will find that we all lack a certain self-confidence, method of thought, and logic. We are unfamiliar with the western syllogism. There is something close to frivolity in our best minds. The best ideas are paralyzed like sterile visions in our heads for lack of any relationship and consistency. It is in man's nature to lose himself when he does not find the means of referring his condition to what preceded and what follows him; then all consistency, all certitude escapes him; without the feeling of continuity to guide him, he discovers that he has wandered aimlessly in the world. There are some of these lost souls in every land, but in ours it is a common characteristic. It is not this lightness of spirit which the French were once accused of and which was, by the way, just an uncomplicated way of understanding reality, which excluded neither intellectual profundity nor breadth and endowed human affairs with an infinite amount of gracefulness and charm; it is really the carelessness of a life without experience and conjecture, one which is unrelated to anything more than the ephemeral existence of the individual detached from the species and which adheres neither to honor nor to the advancement of any community of ideas or interests whatever - not even to the family inheritances and to this fund of prescriptions and perspectives which regulate both public and private life in an order of things founded upon the recollection of the past and the probable outcome of the future. We have

absolutely no universal ideas; everything is individual, volatile, and incomplete. Even in our expressions I find that there is something strangely vague, cold, uncertain, resembling somewhat the features of people placed at the lowest rung of the social ladder. In foreign lands, especially in the South, where physiognomies are so lively and so expressive, I often compared the faces of the inhabitants to those of my compatriots and I was struck by the sullenness in ours.

Some foreigners have credited us with a kind of careless temerity which is especially noticeable among the lower classes in the nation; but, only able to observe certain isolated effects of the national character, they were not able to assess the whole. They did not realize that the same principle which makes us so bold sometimes also makes us always incapable of profundity and perseverance; they failed to see that what renders us so indifferent to the hazards of life also renders us equally indifferent to good and evil, to truth and falsehood, and that this very characteristic deprives us of all incentives which urge men along the paths of improvement; they did not perceive that it is precisely this slothful audacity which explains the fact that in our country even the upper classes are not, sad to say, exempt from vices which belong only to the very lowest classes in other places; they have not noticed that, though we have some of the virtues of nations which are young and only slightly civilized, we do not have any virtues of nations which are mature and highly cultured. I am certainly not claiming that there are only vices among us and only virtues among Europeans, God forbid! But I do say that, in order to judge nations, the pervading spirit which constitutes their existence must be studied, for it is this spirit alone which can lead them towards a more perfect moral state and towards a continuous development, and not such and such a trait of their character.

The masses are subjected to certain forces emanating from the summit of society. They do not think for themselves; among them there is a certain number of thinkers who do the thinking for them, incite the nation's collective mind, and make it advance. While the minority meditates, the rest feel, and the general movement occurs. Aside from some stupid races which have become brutish and preserved only the appearance of human nature, this is true of all the nations on earth. The primitive Europeans, Celts, Scandinavians, Germans, had their Druids, their scalds, and their bards, who were powerful thinkers in their own right. Consider the North American people whom the material civilization of the United States is so intent upon destroying; among them there are men worthy of admiration for their profundity. Now I ask you, where are our wise men, where are our thinkers? Who is there who has ever thought for us, who is there who thinks for us today?

However, situated between the two great divisions of the world, between the East and the West, leaning with one elbow on China and another on Germany, we should have united within us the two great principles of intelligent nature - imagination and reason - and incorporated the history of the entire world into our civilization. The role alloted to us by Providence was not that at all. Far from it, Providence does not seem to have been interested in our destiny at all.

Suspending in our case its beneficent action upon men's spirit, Providence has left us completely on our own, has refused all involvement in any of our affairs, and has not cared to teach us anything. For us historical experience does not exist; ages and generations have flowed by fruitlessly for us. It would seem that in our case the general law of humanity has been revoked. Alone in the world, we have given nothing to the world, taken nothing from the world, bestowed not even a single idea upon the fund of human ideas, contributed nothing to the progress of the human spirit, and we have distorted all progressivity which has come to us. Nothing from the first moment of our social existence has emanated from us for man's common good; not one useful idea has germinated in the sterile soil of our fatherland; we have launched no great truth; we have never bothered to conjecture anything ourselves, and we have adopted only deceiving appearances and useless luxury from all the things that others have thought out.

A peculiar thing! Even in the world of science, which includes everything, our history is not linked with anything and neither explains nor demonstrates a thing. If the barbarian hordes which convulsed the world had not passed through the country in which we live before precipitating themselves upon the West, we would scarcely have furnished a chapter in world history. In order to call attention to ourselves, we had to expand from the Bering Straits to the Oder. One time, a great man wanted to civilize us[7], and in order to give us a foretaste of enlightenment, he threw us the cloak of civilization: we took up the cloak but did not so much as touch civilization. Another time, another great Prince[8], associating us with his glorious mission, led us victoriously from one end of Europe to the other: upon our return from this triumphal march across the most civilized lands in the world, we brought only evil ideas and fatal errors which resulted in an immense calamity which set us back a half a century.[9] We have something or other in our blood which alienates any real progress. Finally, we lived and do now live simply to serve as some great lesson to far-distant posterity which will become aware of it; today, in spite of what anyone says, we do not amount to a thing in the intellectual order. I cannot stop being dumbfounded by this void and this surprising solitude of our social existence. Certainly, an unfathomable destiny is partly responsible for this. But man is also responsible for it, as he is for everything which occurs within the moral world. Let us consult history again; it is history which explains people.

What were we doing as the edifice of modern civilization was arising out of the struggle between the northern people's energetic barbarism and the lofty religious thought?[10] Forced by a fatal destiny, we proceeded to seek the moral code which was to constitute our education[11] in miserable Byzantium, an object held in profound contempt by these peoples. A moment before, an ambitious spirit[12] had removed this Christian family from the universal fraternity: the idea we reaped was in this way disfigured by human passion. In Europe at that time the vivifying principle of unity animated everything. Everything emanated from it and everything converged in it. The entire intellectual movement of this epoch was directed solely towards the unity of human thought, and every impulse

arose from this powerful need to arrive at a universal idea, which is the genius of modern times. Strangers to this marvelous principle, we became a prey for conquest.[13] And then when freed from the foreign yoke, had we not been separated from the common family, we might have profited from these ideas which had arisen during this period among our western brothers; however, we fell into an even more obdurate slavery[14], sanctified by the fact of our deliverance.

Many glowing rays were already then illuminating Europe,[15] breaking through the apparent darkness which covered it! Most of the knowledge which the human spirit is proud of today had already been perceived and, in returning to pagan antiquity[16], the Christian world rediscovered the forms of the beautiful which it still lacked. But we were isolated in our schism, and nothing that was happening in Europe reached us. We had nothing to do with the great work of the world. The eminent qualities with which religion had endowed modern people and which, from a healthy intellectual point of view, raises them as high above ancient people as those were raised above the Hottentots and Laplanders; the new forces with which religion had enriched human intelligence and the customs which submission to an unarmed authority[17] had rendered just as mild as they had formerly been brutal - all that passed us by. When Christianity was advancing majestically along the road which had been traced for it by its divine founder and was sweeping generations along with it, in spite of the fact that we called ourselves Christians, we did not budge. While the world was being completely rebuilt, nothing was being built in our land: we remained squatting in our hovels made of small joists and thatch. In a word, the new destinies of the human race were not accomplished in our land. Though we were Christians, the fruit of Christianity did not mature for us.

I ask you, is it not absurd to suppose as is generally done in our land that, without even bothering to find out how it was produced, we can in one stroke assimilate all this European progress, which occurred so slowly and under the direct, evident action of a unique moral power?

People understand nothing about Christianity, if they do not realize that in it there is a purely historical aspect which forms so essential a part of the dogma that in a certain way it includes all of Christian philosophy, since it reveals what Christianity has done for men and what it can do for them in the future. In this way the Christian religion is revealed not only as a moral system, conceived in the perishable forms of the human spirit, but as an eternal, divine power, acting universally in the intellectual world, and its visible action ought to present us with a perpetual lesson. That is the proper meaning of the dogma of faith in one universal Church as expressed in the creed.

In the Christian world everything must necessarily lead towards the establishment of a perfect order on earth and it does contribute to this really; otherwise Our Lord's word would be denied by the facts. He would not be with His Church to the end of time. The new order, God's reign which the redemption was to effect, would not differ from the old order, the reign of evil,

which it was supposed to annihilate, and there would still be only this imaginary perfectibility of which philosophy dreams and which each page of history refutes: vain intellectual activity which satisfies only material needs and has always raised man to some heights only to precipitate him into a more profound abyss.

Come now, you will say, are we not Christians then and is European civilization the only way to become civilized? We are certainly Christians: but are not the Abyssinians, too? Certainly men can be civilized in a way other than the European one; is not Japan civilized even more than Russia, if we can accept the testimony of one of our compatriots? Do you believe that Abyssinian Christianity and Japanese civilization will produce this world order which I discussed before, and which is the ultimate destiny of mankind? Do you believe these absurd aberrations of divine and human truths will cause heaven to descend upon earth?

There are two very distinct things in Christianity: one is its action upon the individual, the other is its action upon universal intelligence. By nature they blend in Supreme Reason and lead necessarily to the same goal. But our limited point of view could not comprehend the continuity in which the eternal designs of Divine Wisdom are realized. We must distinguish between the divine action which is manifested at a given time during man's life and that which takes place only in infinity. On the day when the work of redemption will finally be completed, all hearts and all minds will become but one single emotion and one single thought, and all the walls separating people and faiths will crumble. But today each one should realize his particular place in the order of the general Christian vocation, i.e, what are the means which he finds in and around himself for participating in the goal proposed for the whole human society.

Thus, there is necessarily a certain circle of ideas in which men's minds are moving, i.e., in which thought revealed from above is to mature and achieve its complete fulfillment within the society in which this goal is supposed to be reached. There this circle of ideas, this moral sphere, naturally produces a certain mode of existence and a point of view which, without being precisely the same for each person, yet with reference to us as with reference to all non-European people, forms a similar way of life, a result of this immense intellectual work of eighteen centuries, in which all the passions, all the interests, all the sufferings, all the conceptions, and all the efforts of reason have participated.

All the European nations went hand in hand, as they advanced together throughout the centuries. No matter what each of them may do today to go off in his own particular directions, they always find themselves on the same route. To understand the familial relationship among these people, men need not study history: just read Tasso[19] and see them all prostrate at the foot of Jerusalem's walls. Remember that during fifteen centuries they had only one single idiom with which to address God, only one single moral authority, only one single religious conviction. Imagine that each year on the same day at the same hour in the same words all of them simultaneously raised their voices to the Supreme

Being during fifteen centuries, in order to celebrate His glory in the greatest of His good works: admirable symphony, a thousand times more sublime than all the harmonies of the physical world! But, since this sphere in which the Europeans live - the only one in which humanity can achieve its final destiny - is the result of the influence which religion exercised among them and, if up to now the weakness of our beliefs or the insufficiency of our dogma has placed us outside the universal movement in which the social idea of Christianity was developed and formulated, and if it has relegated us to the category of people who must profit only indirectly and very late from the complete effect of Christendom, then it is clear that impetus must be given to us, for it is Christianity which has produced everything over there. That is what I meant when I said that we have to begin the education of humanity all over again in our country.

The entire history of modern society occurs on the level of beliefs. That is the essence of genuine education. Instituted originally on this basis, education advanced only by means of thought. Interests have always followed ideas there and have never preceded them. So beliefs have always produced interests and never have interests produced beliefs. All political revolutions were in principle simply moral revolutions. Man sought truth and found liberty and happiness. This approach explains the phenomenon of modern society and its civilization; it cannot be understood in any other way.

Religious persecutions, martyrdoms, propagation of Christianity, heresies, councils: such are the events which fill the first centuries.[20] The entire movement of this epoch, including the barbarian invasions, is linked with these efforts of the modern spirit in its infancy. Formation of the hierarchy, centralization of spiritual power, continued propagation of religion in northern lands, that is what fills the second epoch.[21] Then comes the exaltation of religious sentiment[22] to its supreme degree and the consolidation of religious authority. The philosophical and literary development[23] of the intellect and the culture of moral life under the rule of religion completes this history which can be called sacred, just as much as that of the ancient chosen people. Finally, it is again a religous reaction[24], a new impulse given to the human spirit by religion, which determined the present shape of society. Therefore, the great, or it can be said, the sole interest of modern people, has always centered upon beliefs. All the material, positive, and individual interests were absorbed in that alone.

I know that this prodigious striving of human nature towards its possible perfection has not been admired but, on the contrary, has been called fanaticism and superstition.[25] But, no matter what men may say, judge what a profound impression, for better or worse, a social development, wholly produced by one sole emotion, must have left upon the character of these people! Let any superficial philosophy[26] shout as much as it likes against the religious wars or against the stakes set on fire by intolerance; as for us, we can only envy the fate of people who, in the clash of convictions, in these bloody conflicts for the cause of truth, have created for themselves a world of ideas which we cannot

even imagine - much less transport ourselves there body and soul, as we pretentiously claim we can.

Once more, assuredly all is not reason, virtue, religion in Europe, far from it. But everything is mysteriously dominated by the power which has reigned sovereignly there for a series of centuries; everything is the result of this long chain of events and ideas which has produced the present state of society there. And here is one proof among many: the nation whose features are most strongly delineated, whose institutions are the most permeated by the modern spirit, the English, has in reality only a religious history. Their last revolution[27], to which they owe their liberty and prosperity, as well as the entire series of events since the reign of Henry VIII which caused this revolution, is simply a religious development. In this whole period real political interest appears only as a secondary factor; sometimes it disappears entirely or is sacrificed to that of religious conviction. And as I write these lines, it is still religious interest which moves this favored land.[28] But, generally speaking, how could any European people, if it took the trouble to explore its national consciousness, fail to notice this particular element which, as a holy thought, was constantly the vivifying principle of its history, the soul of its social being?

The workings of Christianity are in no way limited to immediate and direct influence upon men's souls. The gigantic result which it is destined to produce ought to be simply the effect of a multitude of moral, intellectual, social relationships in which the perfect liberty of the human spirit must necessarily be given all possible leeway. So, it is understandable that all that has been done since the first day of our era - or rather since the moment when the Saviour of the world said to His disciples: "Go preach the Gospel to every creature" - together with all the attacks directed against Christianity fits in perfectly with this general idea of its influence. In order to recognize the accomplishment of his prophecies it is enough to note Christ's rule holding sway universally in all hearts, whether accepted consciously or unconsciously, voluntarily or involuntarily. Thus, despite all that is incomplete, vicious, evil, in European society as it stands today, yet it is nonetheless true that God's reign has been realized there in some way, because it contains the principle of indefinite progress and possesses basically and essentially all that is needed for God's reign to become established definitely upon earth one day.

Madame, before concluding these reflections on the influence of religion upon society, I am going to reiterate here what I once said about it in a work with which you may not be familiar.

It is certain, I said, that as long as men do not notice the influence of Christianity wherever human thought comes in contact with it in some way or other, even when it is only in order to combat it, they do not have a clear idea about Christianity at all. Wherever Christ's name is pronounced, this mention alone sweeps men along, no matter what they may do. Nothing demonstrates the divine origin of this religion better than this character of absolute universality, which allows it to infuse itself into men's souls by every possible

means and makes it seize men's minds without their knowing it; even when they seem to resist it most it dominates and subjugates them by introducing into the intellect some truths which were not there before, by causing the heart to experience emotions it had never felt, by inspiring us with sentiments which place us, without our knowing it, in the general world-order. So the function of each individual is determined by Christianity which makes everyone strive towards a single goal. If Christianity is considered from this point of view, each of Christ's prophecies takes on a palpable veracity. Then men clearly perceive the interaction of all the levers which Christ's omnipotent hand sets in motion, in order to lead man to his destiny without violating his freedom or paralyzing any of the powers which are truly his by nature, but, on the contrary, by adding to their intensity and infinitely exalting all their own proper potentialities. In this new economy no moral element remains inactive; the most energetic intellectual talents, as well as the warmest emotional capabilities, and the heroism of a strong soul as well as the abandonment of a submissive spirit, all have a place and an applicability. Accessible to every intelligent creature, associating itself with each pulsation of our heart, whatever it may be, the thought revealed from above carries everything along with it, and grows and strengthens itself even in the face of the obstacles which confront it. In a genius revelation is raised to a height unapproachable by the rest of mankind; in a timid spirit revelation moves ahead simply by hugging close to the earth and goes foward only step by step; in a meditative mind it is absolute and profound; in a soul dominated by the imagination it is ethereal and fertile in images; in the tender and loving heart it melts into charity and into love; revelation always advances in front of each submissive intellect by filling it with warmth, force, and clarity.

See what a diversity of characters, what a multiplicity of powers, it sets in motion; what a variety of different qualities serve but one purpose; what a diversity of hearts beat for but one idea! But the influence of Christianity upon society in general is even more admirable. Roll out the entire picture of development in the new society and you shall see how Christianity transforms all human interests into its own interests, replaces material needs with moral ones everywhere, and in the domain of thought stirs up those great debates without parallel in the history of any other epoch or any other society - those terrible wars based upon religious convictions in which the people's whole life constituted a great idea and unlimited fervor; men will see everything become it and nothing but it, private and public life, family and fatherland, science and poetry, reason and imagination, memories and hopes, joys and sufferings.

Within this great movement communicated to the world by God Himself, happy are those who have in their hearts the intimate realization of the effects which they produce; but all are not active instruments, all do not act with awareness; multitudes, inanimate atoms, inert masses, are necessarily moved blindly without recognizing the forces which set them in motion and without perceiving the goal towards which they are driven.

But it is time to come back to you, Madame. I admit that I have trouble detaching myself from these general considerations. It is from the panorama

presented my eyes from this height that I gain all my consolation; it is in the sweet belief of man's future happiness that I find refuge; when I am obsessed by the false reality which surrounds me, I feel the need of breathing a purer air and gazing upon a more serene sky. I do not believe, however, that I have wasted your time. It was necessary for you to know the proper way of envisaging the Christian world, and what we Russians have to do in this world. I have probably seemed bitter to you in speaking about our country; however, I have only spoken the truth, and not even the whole truth. Besides, Christian reason does not tolerate any kind of blindness, and least of all that of national prejudice, since it is the one which divides man the most.

Here is quite a long letter then, Madame, and I believe that both of us must catch our breaths. At the outset I thought that I could tell you what I had to say in a few words. In thinking it over some more, I find that there is enough here for a book. Does it take care of things, Madame? Let me know. But, whatever your answer, you will not be able to avoid a second letter, for we have only begun to broach our subject. In the meantime, I would be very obliged to you if you would consider the prolixity of the first letter as a compensation for the time that I made you wait. I had taken up my pen on the very same day that I received your letter: then I became completely absorbed in some distressing and fatiguing preoccupations, and I had to get rid of them before putting myself in a frame of mind to talk with you about such serious matters; after that I had to recopy my scribbling which was absolutely indecipherable. This time you will not have to wait a long time: I shall take up my pen again no later than tomorrow.

Necropolis[29], December 1, 1829.

LETTER II

If I succeeded in expressing my thought effectively lately, then you must realize that I am far from thinking that it is only enlightenment which we lack. There is not an abundance of it among us, it is true, but we must resign ourselves for the moment to getting along without those vast spiritual treasures, accumulated through the centuries in other places; our future lies somewhere else. Furthermore, granted that we could have gained the knowledge we still need through learning and contemplation, how could we acquire strong traditions, broad experience, profound awareness of the past, solid intellectual habits? All these are the product of an enormous effort of all the faculties of man and that is what really forms the ethical nature of European people and gives them an authentic superiority. Thus, our task now does not consist in increasing the range of our ideas, but rather in correcting those ideas which we possess and channeling them in a new direction. As far as you are concerned, dear Madame, this means that above all you need a sphere of existence, in which the fresh thoughts introduced into your mind by chance, and the new needs born out of these thoughts in your soul, could be effectively applied. You have to create a new world for yourself, since the one in which you live has become foreign to you.

Begin with the realization that the condition of our soul, no matter how sublimely it has been uplifted, is still necessarily dependent upon the circumstances around us. For this reason you must properly analyze what can be done in your social situation and in your own family, in order to harmonize your feelings with your way of life, your ideas with your domestic relations, your beliefs with the beliefs of those whom you see. Certainly much evil stems directly from the fact that our most profound thoughts stand sharply in opposition to the necessity of subordinating ourselves to social demands. You tell me that you do not have the adequate means to set yourself up comfortably in the capital. Well, so what; you have a charming manor-house: why not settle down there securely to the end of your days? This is a fortunate necessity, and it is up to you to make it as profitable as all the more interesting things which philosophy could teach you. Make your refuge as attractive as possible, fix it up with beautiful decorations, and why should you not put some selected finery in it? It is not a matter of sensual refinement; your efforts will not be aimed at vulgar amusement, but rather will make it possible for you to concentrate wholly upon your inner life. I beg you deeply not to neglect these material details. We live in a land so poor in ideal images that we can easily lose any sense of refinement, any understanding of the beautiful, if we do not surround ourselves with some pieces of poetry and good taste in our homes. One of the most astounding peculiarities of our unique civilization is its neglect of all the comforts and joys of life. We scarcely even think of sheltering ourselves from the extremes in the seasons - and this in a climate of which one may seriously question whether it was intended for the life of thinking creatures at all. If at a

former time we imprudently settled down in this cruel climate, let us at least try to arrange things now in such a way as to be able to forget its harshness a little.

I remember that in the past you read Plato with great pleasure. Remember how carefully the most ideal, the most sublime of the sages of the ancient world surrounds the characters of his own philosophical dramas with all the good things of life.[1] They slowly walk along the charming shores of Ilissos or in the cypressed lanes of Gnosos, or they seek refuge the cool shadow of an old plane tree, or they enjoy sweet moments of relaxation upon blooming grass, or else, letting the day's heat fall away, they take pleasure in the fragrant air and the calm, coolness of night in Attica, or else, garlanded with flowers and with goblets in hand, they lie in comfortable poses, around a well-decked table, and, only after having arranged them beautifully on earth, does the author raise them to the vast expanses beyond the moon, in which he liked to dwell so much. Even in the works of the most austere Fathers of the Church, in St. John Chrysostom, St. Gregory of Nazianzus, and even in St. Basil, I could point out to you splendid descriptions of solitude, in which these great men found calm and lofty inspirations, which made them lights of the faith. These holy men did not think that they lowered their dignity in paying attention to such things, which make up an important part of life. In this indifference towards the good things of life, which some of us consider meritorious, there is something really cynical. One of the things which most retards progress in our land, I think, comes from the absence of any idea of art in our home life.

Therefore, I would like you to set up a completely uniform and methodical way of life in this refuge, which you should decorate as beautifully as possible. We all lack a sense of order and research; let us correct this mistake. There is no point in repeating the proven gains and advantages of an ordered life; in any case, only a lasting subordination to specific rules can accustom us to submit effortlessly to the highest law of our nature. But a person must necesarily get rid of all that hinders an exact utilization of a definite order. One is often distracted from the circle of activity which one had in mind within the first hours of the day and the whole day is ruined. Nothing is more important than the first impressions which we experience, the first thoughts immediately after the deathlike state which separates one day from another.[2] These impressions and these thoughts generally determine the condition of our soul for the whole day. For example, the day can begin with a family quarrel and end with a mistake which cannot be corrected. Therefore, train yourself to make the first hours of the day as important and as solemn as possible; at once lift up your soul to all these heights within its reach, try to pass these hours in complete solitude, do away with all that can have too much of an effect upon you, or can diffuse your efforts too much; after such preparation you can painlessly meet those unpleasant impressions which catch up with you later and which under other circumstances could turn your life into an endless fight, without hope for victory. Add to this the fact that once a person has neglected this time of solitude and concentrated thought, he can never come back to it. Life engulfs you with all its pleasant as

well as boring cares, and you will roll along in the unending wheel of life's incidentals. So let us not allow the only hour of the day which we can have to ourselves to pass uselessly.

I admit, I place great emphasis upon the necessity of daily concentration and rectification in your soul; I am convinced that there is no other way of preventing yourself from being swallowed up by your surroundings; but you realize that this is still far from all. One idea, which permeates your whole life, must always stand before you, as a guiding light for every hour of the day. We come into the world with a confused instinct for moral good; in order to recognize it fully we need a more complete idea, which grows out of this instinct in the course of our entire life. To this inner travail you must bring everything; you must arrange the entire order of your life in relation to it. But all this must flow from the silence of your heart, because the world does not sympathize with anything profound. It turns its eyes away from great convictions; a profound idea fatigues it. True fervor and concentrated thought must thus become part and parcel of your being, as they are not dependent upon opinions of different people but rather lead you with certainty towards a goal. Do not be jealous of society for its sensuous pleasures; in your own solitude you will find delights, which they cannot even understand. I do not doubt that, after you have accustomed yourself to the serene atmosphere of such an existence, you will begin to observe quietly from your cloister how the world flusters and how it disappears away from you; you will delightfully taste peace of soul.

Meanwhile you should assimilate the tastes, habits, and attachments of your new way of life. You must free yourself from all vain curiosities, which foolishly waste and disfigure life, and first of all you must root out the stubborn inclination of the heart which is captivated by novelties, pursues daily gossip, and as a result, always greedily awaits what will happen tomorrow. Otherwise, you will find neither peace, nor happiness, but only continuous disappointment and repugnance. Do you want the stream of the world to be broken upon the threshold of your dwelling in this world? If so, then drive away from your soul all these perturbing passions, which are called forth by worldly events, all these nervous emotions brought about by the news of the day. Close your door against all noise and all the outbursts of the world. Avoid even all light literature, if you have enough determination; really it is nothing but that same noise, but in written form. In my opinion there is nothing more incompatible with a well-ordered intellectual exercise than the thirst to read something new. Everywhere we meet people who have become incapable of serious thought or deep feeling, because they nourish themselves on these productions of the day, where one grabs everything without deepening anything, they promise everything without fulfilling anything, and everything takes on a doubtful or false tinge and leaves emptiness and indefiniteness behind it. If you are looking for satisfaction in the way of life which you choose, then you must never treasure any form of novelty.

There is no doubt that the more you bring your own tastes and inclinations into harmony with this way of life, the better you will feel. The more you

reconcile the exterior with the interior, the visible with the invisible, the more easily you will travel the road before you. However, you should not close your eyes to the difficulties which await you. There are so many of them in our land, that they all cannot even be counted. Here we are not referring to any well-beaten path; it is a path on which a person has to fight his way through thorns and prickle, and now and then even across thickets. In the old civilizations of Europe definite ways of life have existed for a long time, so that there, when a man decides to change his environment, he simply has to choose that new framework into which he wants to move - the place has been prepared beforehand. The roles have already been handed out. As soon as you have chosen a suitable way of life, then the people and objects arrange themselves around you. You have only to utilize them in the proper manner.

It is a completely different thing in our case. How much annoyance and trouble it costs before you adapt yourself to a new environment! So much time is lost, so much strength is expended on arrangements, in order that those around you can learn to regard you in accordance with your new situation, in order to make a fool keep quiet, in order to quell curiosity. Do people here know what the power of thought is? Have men in our land experienced how a lasting conviction resulting from those or other causes permeates the soul contrary to the ordinary run of things by sudden intuition or by a direction from above; how it takes hold of the soul thoroughly, overturns our existence, and raises our being above itself and above our environment? What vivid realization has ever made a heart palpitate here? What man here has ever devoted himself to the veneration of truth? How then could a man who would like to devote himself ardently to his own beliefs, avoid clashing head-on with hindrances and objections from this crowd, which nothing has ever disturbed? You have to create everything, dear Madame, even the very air which you should breathe, and the ground under your feet. And this is literally so. *As for your atmosphere does it not consist of these slaves who serve you?*[3] *As for these furrows, which other slaves dug up by the sweat of their brows, is this not the very ground which supports you? And how many things, how much misery is contained in this one word: Slave! There is the magic circle, in which we all perish, powerless to get out of it. There is the cursed reality against which we crush ourselves.* That is why the noblest efforts, the most magnanimous impulses in our land come to nothing. *There is what paralyzes the will of everyone of us, that is what stains all our virtues.* Burdened down with a fatal sin, where is the soul, so beautiful that it would not choke under this unbearable burden? Where is the man who would be strong enough not to end up hating himself, living in eternal contradiction, always thinking one thing and doing another? Without even having noticed it there I am back once again at my first thesis[4]: let me linger awhile on this and then I shall return to you.

What causes this terrible ulcer which is destroying us? How does it happen that the most striking trait of Christian society is the very one which the Russian people renounced in the very bosom of Christianity? Why is the effect of this

religion reversed in our land? *I do not know, but it seems to me that this alone should cause us to doubt the orthodoxy which we boast about.* You know that not one ancient philosopher attempted to conceive of a society without slaves, nor even to find anything to say against slavery. Aristotle, whom one may regard as representative of all the wisdom upon earth before the appearance of Christ, asserted that some men are born to be free and others to carry chains.[5] You also know that even the most stubborn skeptics admit that we are indebted to Christianity for the destruction of serfdom in Europe. Furthermore, you know that the first cases of emancipation were religious acts completed before the altar and that in the majority of the emancipation texts we find this expression: *pro redemptione animae* - for the salvation of the soul. Finally, you know that the clergy set an example everywhere, by freeing their own serfs, and that Roman Popes were the first to call for the destruction of slavery in the world subordinated to their spiritual authority. Then why did Christianity not have the same effects in our land? *Why, on the contrary, did the Russian people fall into slavery only after having become Christian, namely during the reign of Godunov and Shuiskii?*[6] *Can the orthodox church explain this phenomenon?* Can it explain why it did not raise its motherly voice against the repulsive violence committed by one part of the nation against the other? And please, notice how abstruse we are despite all our exterior power and all our grandeur. During these very days the thunder of our cannons has again roared simultaneously at the Bosphorus and at the Euphrates.[7] However, history, which right at the same hour demonstrates that the abolition of slavery is one of the works of Christianity, does not even note that a Christian people of forty million souls remains in chains! The point is that the significance of any people among mankind is determined exclusively by their intellectual efficacy, and that the interest which they evoke is dependent upon their moral action in the world, and not upon the noise that they make. Now let us go back.

After what I have said to you about the way of life which I would like to see you adopt, perhaps you might have thought that I demand a life of monkish seclusion from you. But I am really referring to a sober, well-thought-out life, which has nothing to do with the gloomy harshness of ascetic morals. I am speaking about a way of life which can be distinguished from the life of the crowd only by a positive idea and by a fervor full of conviction, to which all other thoughts, all other sentiments would be related. This way of life may be combined with all the legitimate goods of life very easily: it even demands them, and human social relations are a necessary condition for it. Solitude has its own dangers, there are sometimes strange temptations in it. When centered upon itself reason feeds on self-made false images, and like Saint Anthony a person then populates his desert with phantoms, children of his own imagination, which pursue him into the world of men. Whereas, if you develop religious thought without passion, without violence, then even amid the noises of the world you preserve that inner attitude which renders all life's enticements and all its shocks powerless. You must find such a sweet and simple spiritual frame of mind,

which would be able to join effortlessly the idea of truth and good with all the activities of the mind and with all the emotions of the heart. You must especially strive to comprehend the truths of revelation. The vast superiority of these truths lies in the fact that they are accessible to each thinking creature, that they adjust themselves to all forms of thought. All possible roads lead to these truths by the humble and blind faith which the masses profess without reflecting upon it, by profound knowledge, by laborious erudition, by the naive piety of the heart, by the reasoned inspiration of the mind, by the exalted poetry of the soul, but the simplest route is by means of recalling these frequent moments in life when we sense most deeply the action of religious fervor in our soul, when it seems that, deprived of all personal power, we are pushed towards the good despite ourselves by a superior force which elevates us from the earth and carries us to heaven. When, conscious of our own powerlessness, we open our minds very willingly to thoughts from heaven, it is then that the loftiest truths will flow, so to say, all by themselves into our heart.

When we frequently go back to the principle of our moral activity, to the moving force behind our thoughts and our actions, it is impossible not to see that a great part of what we do is determined by something which does not belong to us at all. It is precisely the best, the noblest, the most useful things occurring within us that we do not produce by ourselves. All the good which we do is simply the results of the ability which we have of submitting ourselves to the action of an unknown force: the sole, genuine principle of our own activity is the idea of our interest circumscribed within the limits of a given time-period which we call life. This principle is nothing but the instinct for self-preservation which we share with all living things, though we modify it to fit our particular nature. It is useless for us to attempt to be objective in our feelings and our actions, because it is always this more or less understood and more or less remote interest which directs us. No matter how much we ardently desire to act with a general good in sight, this abstract good, which we think up, is simply the one which we ourselves want. We are never able to abnegate ourselves completely; we always include ourselves in what we desire for others. Moreover, in the human expression of its law, supreme reason, yielding to our weak nature, has only ordered us to do unto others as we would have them do unto us; this is very different from the rest of philosophical ethics which claims to understand the absolute good, i.e., the universal good, as if it were up to us to form an idea of the useful in general by ourselves, when we do not even know what would be useful for ourselves. What is the absolute good? This is the unchanging law, by which everything strives towards its own end: there is all that we know about it. But if the idea of this good must guide us in life, do we not have to know something more about it? Undoubtedly, up to a certain point we act in accordance with the general law; otherwise we would possess the basis for our existence within ourselves, which is absurd; however, we act simply without even knowing why ourselves: moved by an invisible force, we can grasp its activity, study it in its effects, identify ourselves with it from time to time, but as for deriving a positive law of our moral nature from all this, that is

impossible. A vague sentiment, a formless idea without authority - more we shall never achieve. All of human philosophy is contained in this terrible mockery by God in the old Testament: See Adam become as one of us, having a knowledge of good and evil.[8]

Now I think you begin to see the necessity of revelation; and here is, in my opinion, what demonstrates this necessity. Man learns how to understand physical law, by observing the phenomena of nature, which follow in succession before his eyes according to a monolithic and unchangeable law. By gathering together the observations of preceding generations, he forms a system of knowledge, which is confirmed by his own experience, and the great method of calculation invests the system with the unchanging form of mathematical certitude. Although this order of knowledge takes in far from the whole system of nature and does not touch upon the universal principle of things, it nonetheless includes positive knowledge perfectly, because this information refers to beings, whose space and continuity can be perceived by the senses or else foreseen by definite analogies. In a word, here is the domain of experience, and insofar as experience can provide certitude for the ideas which it introduces into our mind, experience can make the physical world known to us. You are fully aware of the fact that this certitude can enable us to foresee certain phenomena a long time before they happen and even gives us the power of acting on inert matter with incredible force.

There, we have indicated the means of positive knowledge available to man. If, besides this, our reason has a power of spontaneity, a principle of internal activity, independent of the perception of the material world, then is reason always capable of exercising its powers only upon the materials supplied for it? In the moral order to what aim will man apply these means? What must man observe in order to discover the law of the moral order? The nature of the intellect, is that not so? But is the nature of the intellect made just like material nature? Is it not free? Does it not follow the law which it imposes upon itself? Thus, if we study the intellect in its external and internal effects, what do we learn? That it is free, that is all. And if by chance in this study we once hit upon something absolute, would not our sense of freedom lure us back at that instant necessarily into the very same circle of ideas from which we thought we had just gotten out of before? Would we not, a moment later, suddenly find ourselves in the same place? This circle is inevitable.

But that is not all. Let us assume that we really were elevated to some truths, which were proved so well that the intellect was obliged to admit them absolutely. Let us assume that we had really discovered some general laws, to which an intellectual being must necessarily submit itself. These rules, these truths, would refer only to one part of man's whole life, his earthly life; they would not have anything to do with the other part, which is fully unknown to us, whose mystery cannot be revealed by any kind of analogy. In what way, then, can these rules be the true laws of intellectual being, since they only refer to a part of our existence, one moment in our life? So that, even if we could

discover these laws on the basis of experience, they could only be the laws for one period of time, experienced by our spiritual nature, and in this case how can we acknowledge them as laws of nature? Would this not be tantamount to holding that for each age-group there is a special medical science, and so that in order to cure, for example, a sick baby, it is useless to know the infirmities of mature growth, that in order to prescribe a way of life suitable for youth, it is not necessary to know what is suitable for man in general, that the state of our health is not determined by the state of our health in all moments of our lives and, finally, that we can let ourselves become addicted to all sorts of aberrations and excesses in certain periods of our lives without being punished the rest of our days? I ask you, what would you think of a man who would hold that there is one moral code for youth, another for maturity, and still another for old age, and that education is confined only to the child and the young man? Well, this is exactly what all your ethics of the philosophers assert. It teaches us what we must do today, but it does not concern itself with what will happen to us tomorrow. But what is future life if not the tomorrow of our present life?

All this leads us to the following conclusion: the entire life of an intelligent being embraces two worlds, only one of which is known, and since every moment of life is indissolubly linked with all subsequent moments, which make up life, then it is evident that through our own powers it is impossible for us to attain the recognition of a law which necessarily has to relate to this world and to the other one. Therefore, this law must inevitably be taught to us by an intellect for which one single world, a unified order of things, exists.

However, do not imagine that the philosopher's ethics has no value, from our point of view. We know very well that it contains great and beautiful truths which have guided men for a long time and which even now speak powerfully to man's heart and soul. But we likewise know that these truths were not thought out by human reason but were infused from above at different epochs in the universal history of humanity. This is one of the primitive truths taught by natural reason and one which revelation simply consecrates by its own supreme authority. Praise to the wise men of earth, but glory to God alone! Man had never advanced except by the firebrand of divine light. This light has always lit up the steps of man, but he has not noticed the source of the clear rays of light falling upon his path. It enlightens, says the Evangelist, every man who comes into the world.[9] It was always in the world, but the world saw it not.

The practices introduced by Christianity into the human spirit caused us to see the revealed idea only in the two great revelations of the Old and the New Testament, and made us forget about the original revelation. Without a clear notion of this first communication of the spirit of God with the human spirit of man, it is impossible to understand anything about Christianity. The Christian who does not find the answer to the great problem of moral existence in his own doctrines naturally has to turn to the doctrines of the philosophers. Now the philosophers are only able to explain man by man: thus, they separate him from God and inspire in him the idea that he is self-sufficient. It is generally imagined

that Christianity does not explain all that we need to know; it is believed that there are moral truths which philosophy alone is capable of teaching us: this is a great mistake. There is no human knowledge capable of replacing divine knowledge.

For the Christian the whole movement of the human soul is nothing else but the tableau of God's continuous action in the world. The study of the results of this movement simply furnish him with proofs for the support of his faith. In the different philosophical systems, in all the strivings of man, the Christian sees a more or less fortunate development of the intellectual powers in the world in accordance with the different situations and different ages of society, but he discovers the mystery of man's end not in the uneasy and uncertain agitation of human reason, but in symbols and profound images, willed to mankind through teachings, whose origins disappear into the bosom of God. If he probes into the theories in which earthly thought was formulated step by step, it is only in order to find these more or less obliterated traces of the original teachings, given over to man by the Creator Himself on that day, on which He made him with His own hands; if he concentrates on the history of the human spirit, it is in order to find within it supernatural illuminations which have never ceased enlightening human reason without reason's knowledge, by penetrating all the fogs, all the shadows, with which human reason so loves to surround itself. Everywhere he notes these powerful and indelible ideas which came down from heaven to earth, without which humanity would have long ago become entangled in its own freedom. And finally, he knows that once again it is thanks to these very ideas that the human spirit could take in more nearly perfect truths which God condescended to communicate to him in a more recent epoch.

And therefore, far from attempting to master all the fictions contained in the human brain, he only tries to comprehend as well as possible the Lord's way in the universal life of humanity. He is attracted only to the heavenly tradition; the distortions made by men are of secondary interest for him. In this way he necessarily comes to understand that in the ocean of human opinion there is a certain rule by which men can discover the boat of salvation which invariably follows the star placed in the firmament to guide it; an ever brilliant star, which no cloud ever overcast; it is visible to every eye, in all regions, and it remains over our heads both day and night. And if it is once proved to him that the whole arrangment of the moral world is the result of a wondrous union between the original notions put into our soul by God himself, and the action of our reason upon these ideas, then it will likewise be clear to him that the preservation of these elements, their transmission from century to century, from generation to generation, must have been determined by some special laws and that there are naturally some visible signs, by which it is possible to recognize among all the holy places spread throughout the world, that of the Holy Ark which contains the sacred security of Truth.

Madame, before the world was ready to receive of the new truths, which were destined to spread throughout the world one day, while the education of humanity was being completed through the development of all its own

potentialities, from time to time a vague but profound sentiment allowed a chosen few to foresee the luminous sign of the star of truth passing through its orbit. Thus, Pythagoras, Socrates, Zoroaster, and especially Plato had inexpressible glimpses of it, and their minds were illuminated by an extraordinary reflection. Their eyes, turned towards the point, from which the new sun was destined to arise, caught a sort of glimpse of its dawning. But they could not rise to the knowledge of the genuine characteristics in absolute truth, because, since the time when man debased his nature, truth has appeared nowhere in all its brightness, and men could not recognize it through the fog which covered it. But, in the new world if man still does not completely recognize these characteristics, then this is only because of a voluntary blindness; if he departs from the good path, then this is nothing else but criminal abandonment to the dark principle which was left behind in his heart with the single purpose of making his acquiescence to the truth more worthy.

Madame, you perceive, of course, the aim of all this reasoning: the consequences flowing from it become apparent to the mind by themselves. Next we shall deal with these consequences. I am convinced that you will master them without any trouble. Besides, we will not let our thoughts be broken any more by the digressions which we encountered along the way this time, and we will be able to converse more systematically and methodically.

Good day Madame.

LETTER III

Absorpta est mors ad victoriam[1]

Meditations of a religious nature led us to philosophical reasoning, and philosophical reasoning has brought us back to the religious idea. Now let us go back to the philosophical point of view: we have not exhausted it. When one wishes to consider the religious questions in the light of pure reason, then the religious question simply complements the philosophical one. Moreover, no matter how strong faith may be, it is beneficial for the intellect to realize how to gain support from the powers found within it. There are souls whose faith must be fully capable of calling upon rational proofs when necessary. I believe that you belong precisely to this category. You have had too much contact with school philosophy, your religion is too recent, your habits remain too removed from this inner life in which simple piety is nourished and is satisfied all by itself; therefore, you cannot allow yourself to be guided by feeling alone. Your heart cannot get along without reasoning. Our feelings certainly receive tremendous intuitions; our hearts have great powers; but our feelings are with us only as long as they affect us, and our emotions cannot last continually. On the contrary, the things which we have acquired by reasoning remain with us every hour of the day. An idea which is thought out never leaves us, no matter what our spiritual mood may be, whereas the idea which is only felt escapes us ceaselessly and changes instantaneously, depending upon whether our heart beats more or less rapidly. And then, we do not pick out the kind of heart which we want; the one which we find we keep as is, whereas we are always in the process of forming our reason.

You state that you are naturally inclined towards a religious life. I have often thought this over and do not believe it. You mistake a vague feeling, provoked by circumstances, a dreamy caprice of the imagination, for a necessity of your nature. No, not so, it is not with this troubled ardor that a person devotes himself to his vocation, when one discovers it in life; one accepts then his destiny with perfect security, with completely calm certainty. Of course, it is possible and even necessary to transform oneself; for a Christian the assurance of this possibility and the consciousness of this duty are articles of faith, the most important of his beliefs. Christianity revolves entirely upon the principle of the possible and necessary regeneration of our being, and all our efforts should be directed towards this. But meanwhile when we have not felt the effects of our old nature dissolving within us and a new man made by Christ appearing in us, we cannot ignore any means which might hasten the arrival of this fortunate revolution. Moreover, it cannot occur until we have done all that we can to produce it. Besides, as you know, we do not plan to explore the entire domain of philosophy here; our task is more modest: it is up to us to find out not what is to be found in philosophy, but rather what is not. I hope that this will not be

beyond our capabilities. For a religious spirit it is the only way to understand and to utilize human knowledge, but he must also understand the nature of knowledge and, as far as possible, he should consider everything inside the limits of his beliefs.

Montaigne said: "Obedience is the proper function of a rational soul, which recognizes a celestial superior and benefactor."[2] You know that he is not considered to be a credulous intellectual: today then let this thought of the skeptic serve us as our text: sometimes it is good to enlist allies from the enemy camp; that substantially weakens the powers of the opposition.

First of all, there is no reason other than subordinated reason; that is perfectly true; but that is not all. *Look, does man spend his whole life doing anything but attempting to find something to which he can submit himself?* First within himself he finds a power, which he recognizes as being different from the power which determines the movement occurring outside himself; he senses life within; at the same time he experiences the feeling that this inner power is not unlimited; he senses his own insignificance; after that he notes that an exterior force has power over him and that he must subordinate himself to it; there is his whole life. From the moment he gains the use of reason these two notions - one of an inner, imperfect power, and the other of an exterior and perfect power - permeate man's consciousness by themselves. And, although these two notions do not come down to us in a clear and precise manner, such as those notions communicated by our senses or transmitted by communication with other people, even so, all our ideas of good, duty, virtue, law, and likewise their opposites, come to us simply from this recognized need of ours to subordinate ourselves to something which is independent of our ephermeral nature, free from the emotions of our changeable will and the impulses of our turbulent desires. *Our whole activity is only the effect of a force which compels us to place ourselves in the general order of things, in the order of dependency.* Whether we acquiesce to this power or whether we oppose it, it does not matter, we are always under its sway. Therefore, we should simply try to get the clearest idea possible of its action upon us and, as soon as we have discovered something about it, we should surrender ourselves to it with faith and confidence, for this force which acts upon us without our knowledge never errs; this is the force which causes the universe to advance towards it destiny. Thus, what is the great question of life? It is this: what must be done in order to discover the activity of the sovereign power upon our being?

This is the way we understand the principle of the intellectual world and, you see, as such it corresponds wholly to the principle of the physical world. But one of these principles seems like an irresistible force, to which all is inevitably subordinated, whereas the other principle seems to be just a simple force which acts in union with our own power and is to some degree susceptible to change by our power. This is the logical approach imposed upon the world by our artificial reason. But this artificial reason, which we willfully substituted for the portion of universal reason bestowed upon us in the beginning, *this evil*

reason which so often distorts objects under observation, which makes us see them differently from what they really are does not, however, obscure the absolute order of things so as to deprive us of the ability to recognize the primacy of subordination over that of freedom and the dependency of our self-made laws upon the general law of the world. Therefore, if we accept liberty as a given reality, such reasoning does not hinder us from recognizing dependency as the fundamental reality of the moral order, exactly as we do this in the physical order. Thus, all the powers of the mind, all its means of knowledge can only really come from its docility. *It is powerful only by virtue of its being subordinated.* Human reason simpy has to know to what it must subordinate itself. As soon as this supreme rule of all intellectual and moral activity is set aside, then we immediately fall into erroneous reasoning or willfulness. The whole mission of true philosophy lies then only in demonstrating this rule first of all and then showing the origins of this light which should guide us in life.

Why, for example, does the intellect not rise to the level of mathematical calculation in any one of its own activities? What is mathematical calculation? An intellectual manipulation, mechanical work of reason, in which there is no place for the reasoning will. Where does this prodigious power of analysis in mathematics come from? The answer is that it is a use of reason in full subordination to a given rule. Why does observation in physics provide us with so much? Because it overcomes the natural inclination of the human spirit, because it subordinates the human spirit to a direction diametrically opposed to its habitual way of thought: because it places the human spirit before nature in the humble position appropriate to it.[3] In what way has natural science achieved its great certitude? By reducing reason to a completely passive, completely negative activity. Finally, what is the basis of the brilliant logic which gives this natural science such enormous power? The logic of natural science enchains reason, it brings reason under the universal yoke of obedience and makes it just as blind and submissive as nature itself, the object of its study. "The only road", says Bacon, "open to man for mastery over nature, is the same one which leads to the kingdom of heaven: one enters it only under the humble appearance of a child."[4]

Furthermore, what is logical analysis if not an act of violence which the spirit performs upon itself? Let your reason go on its own and it will act simply by synthesis. We are able to proceed along the analytical road only by exercising an extraordinary effort; we always fall back into the natural means, synthesis. Moreover, it is by synthesis that the human spirit began, and it is synthesis which characterizes ancient science. But no matter how natural, how legitimate synthesis may be, and often even more legitimate than analysis, even so, it is certain that the most efficacious energies of thought belong to the process of subordination, namely to analysis. On the other hand, if we look closely we find that the greatest discoveries in the natural sciences were always pure completely spontaneous intuitions, they came only from a principle of synthesis. But note that, although intuition essentially belongs to human

reason and although it is one of its most active instruments, nevertheless it is impossible for us to be conscious of it, as we are of our other faculties. The point is that we do not possess intuition purely and simply, as we do our other faculties; there is something in it coming from a superior intellect because intuition is destined only to reflect this other intellect in our own. And that is precisely why we owe our most brilliant discoveries to intuition.

Thus, it is clear that human reason does not achieve its most positive knowledge purely by its own inner power but must be perpetually set in motion from the outside. Consequently, the real principle of our intellectual power is in reality nothing more than a kind of *logical abnegation*, identical with moral abnegation and originating from the very same law.

Besides, nature is not only presented to us as matter for experience and knowledge, but also as a rule for our reasoning process. Each natural phenomenon is a syllogism with its major, its minor, and its conclusion. Consequently, nature itself imposes upon the mind the method which the mind must follow in order to learn how to understand nature; therefore, our reason simply submits to a law which is presented in the very movement of things. In this case, when the ancients, the Stoics, for example, who had magnificent prophetic sense, spoke about imitating nature, about obeying it, about conforming to it since they were still much closer to the origin of all things than we, and since they had not yet split up the world into pieces as we - they merely proclaimed the primitive principle of intelligent nature, namely, that no power, no rule comes to us from ourselves.

As for the principle which causes us to act and which is nothing else but the desire of our own good, where would humanity be if the idea of this good were only a fabrication of our reason? Would not each century and each people have its own peculiar idea about it? How could mankind in general have moved ahead in its unlimited progress, if in the heart of man there were not a universal notion of the good, common to all times and to all places and, consequently, not created by man? Where do our actions get their morality? Is it not from this imperative feeling, which compels us to submit to law and to esteem truth? But then law is law only because it is not issued by us; the truth is the truth only because we have not thought it up. Sometimes if we set up as a rule of conduct one which we should not have set up as such, it is only because we do not have enough power to detach our judgments from the influence of our inclinations; in these cases our inclinations dictate a law for us to follow, but that is because we think that we recognize the general law of the world in this law. There are, without a doubt, some men who seem to conform naturally to all the precepts of morality; many eminent characters whom we admire in history are like that. But the feeling of duty is developed in these privileged souls not through thought, but through those hidden impulses which direct men without their knowing it, through great teachings to be found in life without seeking them. These teachings exert more power than our individual thought and make up the general thought of men: the mind is struck either by an example, or by a fortuitous concourse of circumstances, which gets hold of you and lifts you up above your

own self, or else by favorable arrangement of your life, which forces you to do what you would never have done without that; living lessons of the times, singularly bestowed upon certain individuals according to a law unknown to us; and if popular psychology does not take into account at all these mysterious activities of intellectual movement, a more profound psychology which considers the inheritance of human thought as the first element of intelligent nature finds a solution to most of its problems in it. So, when the heroism of the virtuous or the inspiration of the genius are not the thought of the individual, they are always the thought of past ages. Whether we have thought it over or not does not matter; someone had already thought for us before we came upon earth. The feeling of duty, and hence submission is necessarily at the basis of each moral activity, no matter how spontaneous or how isolated it appears.

Now let us see what would happen if man could push his own submission to the point of complete forfeiture of his own freedom. From what has just been said it is clear that this would be the highest level of human perfection. Would not each movement of his soul be produced then by the same principle which produces every other movement on earth? Then instead of his present separation from nature would he not be fused with it? In place of the feeling of his own will which now sets him apart from the general order and makes him into an isolated being, would not the feeling of the universal will be found within him or, to put it another way, the intimate sensation, the profound consciousness of his real rapport with all creation? Instead of this individual, isolated idea, which permeates him at this moment, instead of this personality which isolates him from all around him and clouds up everything before his eyes and which is not at all the necessary condition of his particular nature, but solely the consequence of his violent alienation from universal nature, in surrendering the fatal present *ego*, would he not recover the idea and also the comprehensive personality, as well as the whole power of pure intelligence in its original link with the rest of things? And then would he not at last begin to feel himself living in this narrow and unfortunate life, which induces him to relate everything to himself and to look upon the world only through the prism of his own artificial reason? Of course not; he would begin to feel himself living the life which God Himself gave man on the day when He made him from nothing. The full use of our faculties is designed to discover this original life anew. A great genius[5] once said that man had recollections about some better life: a great idea not vainly flung upon earth; but here is what he did not say and should have said, and here lies the meaning which neither this brilliant genius nor any other from that age of human thought was able to attain this then, that it is up to us to rediscover that lost, beautiful existence without leaving this world.

Time and space[6] are the limits of human life such as it is now. But, first of all, who can prevent me from escaping from the oppressive embraces of time? Where does the idea of time come from? From the memory of past events. But what is remembrance? It is nothing but an act of the will: this is evident from the fact that we remember only what we want to remember; otherwise the whole

succession of events which has taken place during the course of my life would be perpetually present in my memory, would perpetually crowd together in my head but, on the contrary, even in the very moments when I give full freedom to my thoughts, I receive only the recollections which coincide with the present state of my soul, with the sentiment which moves me, with the idea which I am studying. We form our own images of the past just as we form those of the future. What hinders me then from repressing the phantom of the past which lies inert behind me, just as I can, if I wish, destroy the shifting vision of the future hovering before me; what stops me from freeing myself from this intermediate moment called the present, a moment so short that it is already not that same instant, when I pronounce the word which expresses it? We create all time by ourselves, that is certain; God did not create time; he allowed man to make it. But in that case, where could time exist? Could not this fatal thought of time, which obsesses and oppresses me on all sides, disappear completely from my mind? Could not this imaginary reality of time, which so cruelly dominates and crushes me, be totally dissipated? No more limits to my existence, no more obstacles to the vision of infinity; my glance plunges into eternity; the earthly horizon has disappeared; the heavenly vault is no longer fixed to the earth at the end of the immense plain which stretches before my eyes; I see myself in this unlimited continuity, not divided into days or hours or fleeting moments, but one continuity forever, without movement and without change, in which all separate beings are lost in each other and, finally, in which everything eternal subsists. Each time that our intellect succeeds in throwing off the fetters which the intellect itself forged, it understands this kind of time, just as that time in which it now subsists. Why does our intellect ceaselessly burst out of the immediate succession of things, measured by the monotonous swings of the pendulum? Why does our spirit unceasingly leap into this other world in which the fatal striking of the clock is not to be heard? The reason is that infinity is the natural atmosphere for thought; infinity is the only true time, and the other time is simply one which we create ouselves; why I do not know. As for space, everyone knows that thought does not reside in space; thought logically accepts the conditions of the tangible world, but it does not inhabit this world. Consequently, no matter what reality has been assumed for space, this is merely a fact outside of thought, and it has nothing to do with the existence of the intellect itself; though it may be an invisible form, it is nothing but a form under which the exterior world appears to us. Thus, space would be even less able than time to comprise this new existence, about which the conversation here revolves.

Here is this superior life towards which man must strive, a life of perfection, certitude, clarity, and infinite knowledge, but most of all, a life of perfect submission, a life which man once possessed and which is promised to him once again. And do you know what kind of life this is? This is Heaven, and there should be no doubt about that. We can already enter it even now, there should be no doubt about that. It is nothing but the complete renovation of our nature within the given conditions, the last goal of intellectual striving, the final

destiny of the spirit in the world; I do not know whether each of us will achieve the glorious goal at the end of it, but the fact is that the definitive point of our progress can only be a complete fusion of our nature with the nature of the whole world, for only in this way can our spirit ascend to the perfection of things which are expressed by the supreme intellect itself.[7]

But so long as we still have not reached the end of our pilgrimage, so long as this great fusion of our being with universal being is not completed, can we not at least fuse with the intellectual world? Is it not within our power to identify ourselves on any level with beings similar to ourselves? Are we not capable of applying their needs, their interests to ourselves and transferring their feelings to ourselves, so that we finally begin to live only for them and feel only through them? Assuredly. Sympathy, love, charity - no matter what name you call our surprising capability of fusing ourselves with what happens around us - it is certain that it is inherent in our nature. If we so choose, we can mingle with the moral world so well that, provided we know about it, we may experience everything that happens in nature as if it were happening to us; more than that, it is not even necessary that events in the world preoccupy us extraordinarily; just the general but profound idea of the affairs of men, just the intimate consciousness of our real link with humanity is enough to make our heart start to beat for the destinies of all mankind and to make each of our thoughts, each of our actions harmonize with the thoughts and actions of all men in one harmonious whole. If we cultivate this eminent virtue in our nature, by developing it more and more within our soul, we will reach those heights from which the rest of the route which we have to follow will be revealed entirely; and blessed are those mortals who, once having achieved this, will be able to maintain this high level without sinking down again to the low level from which they ascended! Until then our whole existence would only be a perpetual oscillation between life and death, a prolonged agony; from this moment on, the law of the moral world would no longer be an impenetrable mystery to us.

But do things happen in this way in the world? Just the opposite. This law of intelligent nature can only be revealed very late and very obscurely in life; you see, it is not necessary to figure it out, any more than it is to figure out the physical law. All we can do is keep our soul open for this knowledge when it comes under our intellectual scrutiny. The moral law appears much less evident than the physical law, in the ordinary course of events, in the daily preoccupation of our mind, in the habitual drowsiness of our soul. True, it rules over us sovereignly, it orders each of our actions, each fact in our reason; and leaving us the consciousness of our own activity, by means of a marvelous combination, through a perpetual miracle, the moral law imposes a dreadful responsibility on us for all that we do, for each beat of our heart, even for each fleeting thought which barely skims our brain; but despite that, the moral law is hidden from our understanding in profound shadows. What takes place, then? Not recognizing the real principle which uses man as its instrument, man unknowingly creates his own law, and this law which he prescribes for himself

out of his own initiative is what he calls the *moral law*, or else wisdom, the sovereign good, or simply law, or something else again.[8] And then in his blindness man ascribes all the certainty, all the absoluteness, and all the immutability of the real law of his being to this fragile product of his own hands, a product which he can arbitrarily break and really does break every moment in the day, whereas he is evidently only able to understand the inevitable necessity of the hidden principle and nothing more by means of reason alone.

Besides, although the moral law, just like physical law, exists outside ourselves and is not dependent upon our knowledge of it, nonetheless there is an essential difference between these two laws. A countless number of men have lived and still live without the slightest notion about the material forces behind nature; God wanted man's reason to discover that little by little all by itself. But no matter how degraded the intelligent being may be, no matter how limited his abilities, he could never be totally deprived of some knowledge about the principle which causes him to act. Deliberation and judgment assume necessarily the notion of good and evil. Take this notion away from man and he will not deliberate, he will not judge, he will no longer be a rational being. God could not let us live one sole instant without this notion; He created us with it. And, placed in our soul in an incomprehensible way, this imperfect idea forms the entire essence of intellectual man. You have just seen what conclusions could be drawn from this idea, if men could succeed in restoring the idea to its original purity, such as it was given to us in the beginning; but men must also see what can be done by seeking the principle of all our knowledge solely in our own nature.

Sokolniki, June 1

LETTER IV

The will is nothing but a mode of thinking. Whether the will is conceived of as limited or unlimited, all the same, some cause which compels it to act must be recognized: therefore it should be considered not as a free principle, but as a conditioned principle.

Spinoza. *De Anima*[1]

We have seen that each natural phenomenon can be considered as a syllogism, but it can likewise be considered as a number. Men impose numbers upon nature and consider it in action - this is observation; or they reason by means of abstraction - this is calculation; or lastly the quantities discovered in nature are considered to be entities, and calculations are produced with them; in this case calculation is applied to observation and science is completed. Here then is the whole circle of positive knowledge. One must only realize that, properly speaking, quantities do not exist in nature; if they did, then analytical deduction would be equivalent to a fiat of the Creator, because its perfect certitude would not lack a thing and would consequently be omnipotent.[2] Impotence then is error; there is nothing higher than perfect truth. Real values, absolute unities, exist only in our mind; in the universe only numerical appearances exist. These appearances which provide the basis for our apprehension of materiality are what give us the ideas of numbers: here is the foundation of mathematical conception. Thus, the numerical expression of things is nothing but an ideological mechanism which we construct from these data furnished by nature. First, we transfer these data to the field of abstraction, then we accept them as values, and after that we do what we want with them. Consequently, mathematical certitude also has its own limit; let us be on guard against losing sight of this fact.

In its application to natural phenomena certainly numerical science is fully sufficient for empirical reasoning, as well as man's material needs, but it is in the abstract order that numerical science is far from being sufficient in the same way for the certitude demanded by the mind. A fixed, unchanging, geometrical reasoning, such as most of the geometricians conceive it, is something as foolish as it is impious. If there were complete certitude in mathematics, a number would be something real. Thus, the Pythagoreans[3], the Cabalists[4], and similar men understood numbers in this fashion, since they ascribed all sorts of powers to numbers and found the principle and essence of all things in them. They were perfectly logical: they thought of nature as composed of numerical values, and they scarcely concerned themselves with anything else. But we who see something other than numbers in nature, we who seriously believe in God, are absurd when we dare to arm the hand of the Creator with a compass. We forget that measure and limit are the same thing, that infinity is the first attribute of divinity, that which forms, so to say, all its divinity; so that if we make the Supreme Being into a geometrician, we deprive Him of His eternal nature and bring Him down to our level. But pagan ideas still dominate us without our

knowing it; that is what makes us fall into these sorts of errors. It is not true that number exists in divine thought; creations flow from God like the waters of a torrent, without measure and without end. But man needs a point of contact between his limited intelligence and God's infinite intelligence, which are separated by immensity, and that is why he loves to imprison divine power in the dimensions of his own nature. Here is also a real anthropomorphism, a thousand times worse than the anthropomorphism of these simple people who reduce the divinity to a being similar to themselves, as they strive to draw near to God, because they are unable to imagine a moral individual made differently from the one of which they are aware. In reality the philosophers do not do any better. "They ascribe to God", said a great thinker, who knew what he was talking about[5], "a reason, similar to the one which they themselves possess. Why? Because they know of nothing more perfect in their own nature than their reason. But as divine reason is the cause of everything, and as man's reason is only an effect, what then can there be in common between these two reasons?" He says, "The most that the constellation of the Dog, shining in the heavens, and the dog, which runs about in the street have in common is, the name alone."[6]

You see, all the positiveness of the sciences which we call exact comes from the fact that the objects which they study are *quantities*; limited things. It is natural that the mind, since it can comprehend these objects fully, achieves in understanding them its greatest certitude. But you also see that, in spite of our direct participation in the formation of these truths, we do not, however, extract them from ourselves. The first ideas which suggest them to us are given from the outside. Thus, the logical result issuing at once from the very nature of this knowledge which is the closest to certainty that we can get, is that this knowledge refers only to something limited, that it does not originate immediately in our brain, that we exercise our faculties in this order of ideas only upon the finite, and that we do not create anything. So then what do we find, if we try to apply the method offered to us by this knowledge to our other knowledge? That the absolute form of the known object, no matter what the latter might be, should be necessarily the form of something finite; that its place in the intellectual sphere must be located outside ourselves. These are the natural conditions of certitude. But on this basis where are we in relation to intellectual things? First of all, where are the limits of the data belonging to psychology and ethics? There are no limits. Secondly, where does moral activity occur? Within ourselves. Thus, can the method which the mind follows in the field of positive ideas be utilized in this other field? Impossible. And, in that case, how can we gain evidence? As for myself, I do not know. It is strange then that, as simple as this reasoning is, philosophy has never made it. Never has philosophy decided to clarify this essential difference between two spheres of human knowledge; philosophy always confused the finite with the infinite, the visible with the invisible, what can be perceived by the senses with what cannot. Even if philosophy sometimes changed its language, in the depths of its own thought it never doubted for one instant that it would be possible to understand the moral

world in the same way as the physical world, by studying the moral world with instrument in hand, by calculating, by measuring intellectual dimensions, just like material ones, by experimenting upon intelligent being as upon inanimate being. Amazing, how lazy the human mind is! In order to avoid the effort, which clear comprehension of the superior world demands, the human mind distorts this world, distorts its own self, and then goes off its own way, as if nothing had happened. We shall see why the human mind acts in this way. Also, men must not think that everything in the natural sciences consists merely of observation and experimentation. One of the secrets of their beautiful methods lies in the fact that they submit to observation only what can really be an object of observation. This is a negative principle, if you want, but it is stronger, more fruitful than the positive principle itself. The new chemistry owes its progress to this principle; in general physics it is this principle which is at the basis of this abhorrence of metaphysics which became its principle rule and the foundation of its method since the time of Newton. But what does this mean? Nothing more than the fact that all the perfection of these sciences, all their might flows from their ability to restrict themselves wholly to their legitimate circle, that is all. But, what is the procedure for observation really? What do we do when we observe the movement of the stars in the heavens or the movements of living forces in the organic being, when we study the powers which move bodies or move the integral molecules which make up bodies, when we study chemistry, astronomy, physics, physiology? We conclude from what was to what is going to be; we link up the facts which follow one another directly in nature, and from this we deduce the nearest result. That is the necessary orbit of the experimental method. However, in the moral order do you know anything which happens by virtue of a constant, irrevocable law which would enable you to draw conclusions in the same way from one fact to another and thus foretell with certainty something about to happen on the basis of what went on before? It is not like that at all. On the contrary, here all is done only by virtue of divergent acts of free wills which do not recognize any rule except their whim; here all is the effect of the will and of the liberty in man. Then of what use would the experimental method be here? No use at all.

This is the lesson, provided for us by the natural course of the human mind in the sphere of knowledge in which it is given the possibility of attaining its highest certitude. Let us move on to the lesson contained in this knowledge itself.

Man has, of course, always cultivated the natural sciences, but you know that it has only been about a century since they suddenly rose to their present position of importance. Three things gave them the impetus which carried them up so quickly to this height: *analysis* - created by Descartes; *observation* - by Bacon; and celestial geometry - by Newton. Analysis, restricted entirely to the mathematical order, does not concern us here; we simply note only that it caused the application of an element of false rigorousness to the ethical sciences, and it prodigiously hindered their progress. The new way of studying the natural sciences, conceived by Bacon, is of the greatest importance for all philosophy,

for this method gave philosophy this empirical tendency which determined the whole character of modern thought for such a long time. But, in our present investigation we are especially interested in the law by which all bodies gravitate towards one common center; we are going to study this law then.

At first, it appears that universal gravity takes in all the forces of nature; however, it is not the unique force in nature, and precisely because of the fact the law which gravity obeys is so profound from our point of view. Attraction all by itself not only fails to explain the world but does not explain anything at all. By itself attraction would simply turn all materiality into one formless, inert mass. Every movement in nature is produced by two forces which pull the movable object in two different directions, and this principle appears most clearly, especially in cosmic movement. But once the astronomers recognized that heavenly bodies are subject to the law of gravity and that the effects of this law can be calculated with accuracy, the whole world-system became a geometrical problem, and with the aid of a kind of mathematical fiction men now assume the most general law of nature to be simply Attraction or Universal Gravity. This force, without which gravity would be worthless, is the *Initial Impulse* or *Thrust*. The whole teaching of the *Parallelism* in the two worlds rests upon the precise idea of the simultaneous activity of these two forces, as provided by science: now we need only apply this idea to the combination of these two forces, which we set up earlier in the intellectual order, the one force which we are aware of, our *free choice*, our will, the other, which dominates us without our knowing it, the action of an *exterior force* upon our being, and then see what the consequences will be.[7]

The force of attraction is known to us through an infinity of its effects; it is perpetually happening before our eyes, we measure it, we have a thoroughly certain knowledge about it. All this, as you see, corresponds marvelously to the idea which we have of our own power. Concerning thrust the only thing that we know is divine action upon our soul. However, we are similarly completely convinced of the existence of both forces. Thus, in both cases there is precise and exact knowledge of one thing, a vague and obscure knowledge of the other, but *complete certitude* for both. This is the direct application of this method of representing the material order of the world, and you see that it is presented to the mind in a completely natural fashion. But attention must still be paid to the fact that astronomical analysis extends the law of our solar system to all star-systems which fill up spaces in the heavens, that molecular theory accepts the law as the cause behind the very formation of bodies, and that we have a complete right to consider the law of our system to be a universal condition of all creation, or close to it; in that case this point of view takes on an extremely important meaning.

Moreover, as for all the lines which we draw between different beings, all the imaginary distinctions which we establish for convenience sake and in accordance with our own desires, does all that have absolutely anything to do with the creative principle itself? No matter what we do, do we not have an

inner feeling about a reality superior to the apparent reality around us? And is this other reality not the only truly real, *objective* reality which includes all being and fuses us too with the general unity? In this unity, then, all differences fade away, all limitations which confront the mind because of its own imperfection and the limits of its own nature; and thus there is only one unique and universal fact left in all the infinity of things. Really the intimate feeling about our own nature, as well as our view of the universe, could not allow us to comprehend created being in any way other than in a state of continual motion. This is a universal fact. For this reason the idea of motion naturally has to precede every other idea in philosophy. But this idea of motion has to be sought for in geometry, because it is only there that we find it cleansed of all arbitrary metaphysics, and it is only in linear motion that we can acquire the absolute notion of any and all motion. And what does this mean? The geometrician cannot imagine any motion except imparted motion. He is thus forced to start from the assumption that one thing by itself is inert and that every motion is the effect of an impulse imparted from the outside. Thus, in the loftiest abstraction, just as in nature, we constantly have to return to an exterior and primary action independent of the object under observation. The very idea of motion is thus logically inseparable from the idea of an action distinct from every power and every cause which exists in the very object in which motion operates.

And that is also why it is so hard for the human spirit to free itself from this old error which holds that all ideas come to the mind through the senses. It is quite simple: we would be more inclined to be doubtful about our own power than about anything else on earth, so the positive absurdity of the empiricist lies solely in the fact that this system attributes the material with an immediate action upon the immaterial and thus makes bodies strike with intelligences, instead of bringing objects of the same nature into contact, as in the physical order, intelligences with intelligences. Finally, let us realize that in the pure idea of motion materiality does not mean a thing: the entire difference between material motion and moral motion consists in the fact that the elements of one are space and time, while time alone is the element of the other; but it is evident that the idea of time alone is enough to give us the idea of motion. Thus, the law of motion is the law of the universality of things, and what we said about physical motion is wholly applicable to intellectual or moral motion.

What should we conclude from all that? That there is not the slightest difficulty in considering the proper activities of man as an *accessory* principle: as a force which works only insofar as it is united with another superior force, just as the force of gravity works only along with the force of initial thrust. Here is the point which we wanted to get at.

Perhaps men will think that there is no place for the philosophy of the ego in this system. This would be a mistake. On the contrary, the philosophy of the ego fits in beautifully with this system: only it is simply reduced to its own true importance, that is all. From what we just said about the double action which rules the world, it does not follow at all that our own activity comes to nothing; this means then that it is very useful for us to meditate on the power which we

possess and to strive to understand it as best we can. Man is constantly stimulated by a force, which he does not sense at all, it is true, but this exterior action has an influence upon him by means of his awareness; consequently, no matter how the idea which I find in my head reaches me, I find it there only because I am aware of the idea which I find there. But to become aware is to act. Therefore, I really and unceasingly act at the same time that I am dominated by something more powerful than myself. *I am aware* of it. One factor does not destroy the other, they occur without negating each other, and one is just as demonstrable as the other. So that if someone should ask me how this action operates on me from the outside, this is an entirely different question, and you certainly realize that this is no time to consider it here; a philosophy of higher order has to answer it. Ordinary reason need only show the existence of exterior action and accept it as one of its own fundamental articles of faith; the rest does not concern it. But who does not know how strange thoughts are introduced into our intelligence? How do we submit ourselves to the advice and opinions of others? What thinking man does not distinctly understand the mechanism of one reason subordinated to another, while it nonetheless preserves all its own power, all its own abilities? Thus, the great problem of free will, no matter how abstruse it may be, would certainly not offer any difficulties, if only men understood how to become permeated with the idea that the nature of intelligent being consists only in awareness and that, insofar as intelligent being is aware, it loses nothing of its own nature, no matter how awareness comes to it.

The point is that the Scottish school[8], which ruled so long in the philosophical world, confused all questions about ideology. You know that the Scottish school attempts to find the source of all human thought and explain it all by revealing the thread which binds the present perception with the previous perception. Having once come to the source of a certain number of ideas by means of their association, they concluded that all that happens in our intelligence is a product of that same principle cited above, and after that they refused to take anything else into account. Therefore, they imagined that everything can be reduced to the fact of consciousness and upon that fact then empirical psychology was built. But, tell me, is there then anything in the world which we sense more than the incessant production of ideas in our head, a production in which we perform no role? Is there anything that we can be more assured of than this continuous work of our intelligence which takes place without us doing absolutely anything about it? The problem, besides, would not be closer to solution, even if it were possible to trace all our ideas to some single bundle of ideas whose origin would be fully known to us. Certainly in our minds nothing happens which is not linked up in some way or other with what went on before; but it does not follow from this that each change of my thought, each form which my thought takes step by step, is caused by my own power: consequently there is still a place for an immense influence fully distinct from mine. So, at best, empirical theory only verifies certain phenomena in our

nature; however, as for the general phenomenon, it does not take that into account at all.

Finally, a man's proper activity is genuinely so only when it corresponds to the law. Every time that we act contrary to the law it is no longer we ourselves who determine ourselves, but it is our environment which determines us. When we abandon ourselves to these outside influences, when we go beyond the law, we annihilate ourselves. But in our submission to divine power, we are never fully conscious of this power, therefore, it can never encroach upon our freedom. Thus, our freedom consists only in the fact that we do not sense our dependency: this is enough for us to consider ourselves as perfectly free and liable for everything which we do, for each idea which we think. Unfortunately, man understands freedom in another way: "He believes himself free", says Job, "like a wild baby jackass."[9]

Yes, I am free, how can I doubt it? While I write these lines, do I not know that I have the power not to write them? If a Providence has determined my destiny irrevocably, what difference does it make if I cannot feel its power? But, an idea comes to be associated with that of my liberty, an awesome idea, its terrible, merciless consequence the misuse of my liberty and *evil* which results from it. Assume that one single molecule of matter would make an arbitrary movement once, for example, instead of tending towards the center of its system, it would deviate a little from the radius in which it is located. What would happen? Would not the whole order of the world be disturbed at once? Would not each atom be moved out of place into infinite space? As if that were not enough, would not all bodies collide together at the opening and destroy one another? Very well, do you realize that each of us does this very same thing each moment in the day? We are constantly making arbitrary movements, and each time we shake the entire universe. And it is not only our exterior movements that cause this awesome devastation within creation but each pulsation of our soul, each of our most intimate thoughts. This is the spectacle which we offer to the Supreme Being. Then why does He stand for this? Why does He not sweep away this world of rebellious creatures? And even more surprising, why has He provided them with this terrible power? He willed it so. "Let us create man in our own image and likeness", He said.[10] This image of God, this likeness with Him - this is our liberty. But as creatures made in such a surprising manner, we are also made so that we may know that we oppose our own creator. Then how is it possible to doubt that, since He decided to give us this surprising power which seems to clash with the whole order of the universe, He did not also decide to give it rules and to let us know how we should use it? In the beginning the whole of humanity personified in one man who represented all future generations heard the Word of God; later on God deigned to illuminate some chosen men, so that they would preserve the truth on earth, and finally, He judged one of us worthy to be invested with all His authority, to be initiated into all His secrets, so that He was *only one* with Him, and charged Him to communicate to us all that we can know about the divine mystery. Here is what

sacred doctrine teaches us. But, does our own reason not tell us the same thing? If God were not instructing us, then could the world, we ourselves, or anything else continue to exist for a moment? Would not all be changed immediately into chaos again? This is certainly so, and when our reason does not blind itself by its lying self-confidence, when it stops immersing itself completely in its pride, then it tells us precisely what faith tells us, namely, that God must necessarily instruct and lead man from the very first day of his creation and that He has never ceased and will be ever close to instruct and lead man until the end of time.

Sokolniki, June 30

LETTER V

Much of the soul they talk, but all awry.
Milton[1]

You see, everything leads us back to this absolute principle that human reason itself cannot prescribe a law for itself, any more than human reason could prescribe a law for every other created thing. The law of moral nature has been given to us once and for all, like the law of physical nature: if we find the latter already available, there is not the slightest reason why we should not find the other one already available, too. But, like the light from those suns which revolve in other heavens, whose rays though weak neverthless reach us, the light of the moral law glimmers from a distant and unknown region; it is up to us to keep our eyes open to receive this light when it begins to shine before us. You have seen that we came to these conclusions by way of inductive reasoning which revealed certain elements of identity between the material order and the intellectual order. School psychology[2] proceeds from about the same point, but it does not come to the same conclusions. From natural science it takes only observation, what is least applicable to the object of its study. Instead of achieving the real unity of things, school psychology only mixes us what should stay eternally separated; instead of discovering law, it discovers chaos. Undoubtedly, an absolute unity exists among all beings: this is the very thing which we are attempting to demonstrate as best we can; furthermore, in that lies the credo of ever healthy philosophy. But this unity is objective unity, completely outside the reality which we sense; an immense fact which throws an extraordinary light on the great All and forms the logic of cause and effect, but which has nothing in common with the sort of pantheism professed by the majority of contemporary philosophers, a sad teaching which colors all contemporary philosophic systems with its false tint, so that there is no contemporary system which does not end up treating spiritual facts exactly as if they were material, despite all its own pretty promises of spirituality.

The mind by its very nature strives for unity, but unfortunately up to now men still have not really understood in what the real unity of things consists. To convince yourself of this, look at the way in which the majority of intellectuals understand the continuity of the soul. Is it really possible to have an eternal God and a soul, eternal like He, an absolute infinity and another absolute infinity next to it? Is absolute infinity not absolute perfection? How could two eternal beings, two perfect beings exist alongside one another? Here is the whole point: Since there is no legitimate motive for supposing the simultaneous annihilation of both component parts in a being composed of intellect and matter, it was natural for the human mind to arrive at the idea that one of these parts could outlive the other. But at that point the human mind should have called a halt. I

may live on a hundred thousand years after this moment, which I call death and which is merely a physical phenomenon having nothing in common with my intellectual being, but this is still far from eternity. And like all man's instinctive ideas, the idea of the immortality of the soul was at first simple and understandable; however, once it had fallen upon the excessively rich soil of the East, it grew inordinately there, and ever-growing it resulted one day in this irreligious dogma which mixes the creature up with the Creator, breaks the line dividing them for all time, burdens the spirit down with the vast weight of a limitless future, and mixes and confuses everything. But afterwards when this idea was introduced into Christianity along with many others inherited from the pagans, it acquired a lot of support from this new force and was thus able to subjugate the heart of man completely. However, it is clear to everyone that the Christian religion considers eternal life as the reward for a perfectly holy life; so, if man still has to merit eternal life, then it is evidently impossible for him to have had it before; if eternal life is simply the reward for a perfect life, how could it be at the end of an existence passed in sin? An astounding thing! Although the human spirit has been illuminated by the greatest of all lights, yet it still is not able to master the whole truth and constantly oscillates between truth and falsehood. One has to admit that every philosophy is necessarily enclosed in a certain fatal circle without any possible exit. In the field of ethics every philosophy makes its own law for itself at the outset and then begins to submit to it without letting us know how or why; in the field of metaphysics every philosophy always sets up a principle in advance, from which it then makes out a whole world of things created by it. So it always begs the question[3], but this is inevitable: otherwise what function would reason have in all that? None at all, that is evident.

For example, note how the most certain, the most positive, the most strict philosophy of our time proceeds.[4] It begins with the establishment of the fact that, since our reason is the given instrument of knowledge, it is necessary first of all to study how to know our reason. Without that, the philosophy says, there is no way of making suitable usage of reason. After that, this philosophy attempts to dissect and to analyze this reason as best it can. But how does this philosophy perform this preliminary work, this indispensable work, this anatomy of intelligence? Is it not by means of this reason itself? Thus, since in this, its most primary and most important operation, this philosophy is forced to utilize an instrument which by its own admission it still does not know how to use, how can it come to the knowledge which it seeks? This is impossible to understand. However, this is not even everything. More self-confident than all previous philosophical systems, it asserts that it is necessary to treat the spirit absolutely like exterior objects. In that case the very same eye, which you use to see the world, could also allow you to see your very own being. In the same way that you place the world in front of you, you can place your own self in front of you; in the same way that you meditate upon the whole world and experiment on it, you can meditate and experiment upon your own being. Since

the law of identity is common to nature and to intelligence, you can handle both of them in the same way. If on the basis of a series of identical phenomena in the material order, you come to a conclusion about a general phenomenon in the intellectual order, what stops you from concluding to a universal fact out of a series of similar facts by use of the same method? Just as you are in a position to foresee a physical event, with the same certitude you can also foresee a moral fact. The same method used in physics can also be used in psychology. This is the way empirical philosophy works. Fortunately today this philosophy is only held individually by some lazy intellectuals who obstinately continue to stick in their old ruts. A new light already charts a way through our obscurities, and everything going on in contemporary philosophy strives to bring us back to better ways, even this eclecticism[5] which is so gentle and obliging that it seemingly aspires simply for its own self-effacement. Among the intellectual trends today there is a particular one which must be distinguished from the others. This is a type of subtle Platonism, a new creation of profound and meditative Germany; it is transcendent idealism[6], filled to overflowing with lofty rational poetry, and it has already shaken the ancient edifice of philosophical superstitions to its very foundations. However, up to now the new creation lives in ethereal heights, where men can hardly breathe. It hovers in its diaphanous atmosphere either illuminated by some unknown soft and delicate light or else eclipsed in an unclear or dark twilight, so that men take it to be one of those fantastic mirages which occasionally appear in the southern heaven, only to disappear in an instant, without leaving behind any traces in the air or in man's memory. Let us hope that this beautiful and majestic thought will soon descend into inhabitable regions: we will then welcome it with most lively affection. But for the time being let it follow its own vagabond route, and we will continue along a surer route which we have mapped out for ourselves.

So then, if we have conceived of motion in the moral world as well as motion in the physical world as the effect of an initial thrust, then does it not follow from this that both motions are subjected to the same laws in their continuity and, consequently, all intellectual phenomena are simply the result of this analogy? This means that just as bodily collision in nature serves to continue this first thrust, imparted to matter, intellectual collision likewise continues spiritual motion; just as in nature everything is linked with all that goes before it and follows it, so each individual human and each human thought are linked with all human beings and with all human thoughts, those which precede and those which follow; and, since nature is one, so, according to the picturesque expression of Pascal, also the whole succession of men is one man, who always exists[7], and each one of us participates directly in the intellectual work which is being completed throughout the centuries. Finally, just as a certain plastic and perpetual work of the material elements or atoms, the generation of physical beings, constitutes material nature, so also then a similar work of intellectual elements or ideas, the generation of spirits, constitutes spiritual nature; and just as I conceive of all tangible matter as one whole, then I

must also conceive of the succession of intelligences as a single and sole intelligence.

The main vehicle for the formation of spirits is, of course, the word: without it it is impossible to imagine either the source of intelligence in an individual or his development within humanity. However, the word alone is not enough to produce the great phenomenon of universal intelligence; it is far from being the sole means of communication among men; consequently, it would have to include all the intellectual activity being done in the world. A thousand invisible ties unite the thoughts of one reasonable being with those of another; our most intimate thoughts discover every means possible for reproducing themselves outside; when they are disseminated, when they cross one another, they fuse together, they unite, they pass from one spirit to another, they sow, they fertilize, and finally, they engender universal reason. Sometimes it happens that an idea seems to make no impression upon its surroundings; nonetheless, the movement has been imparted, the impact has taken place; in time the idea will find a congenial thought which the idea will stimulate by its contact, you will see the reincarnation of the idea, and it will produce some surprising effect upon the intellectual world. You know this experiment from physics: you hang some balls on a horizontal string, you hold the first ball aside, and it is the last globe which bounds away, the ones in between remain unmoved. Here is how the idea is transmitted through men's brains.[8] How many great and beautiful thoughts, appearing from somewhere or other, have gripped innumerable multitudes and generations! How many lofty truths live and act, ruling and enlightening us, and no man knows where these formidable powers or brilliant lights come from, nor how they traversed time and space! Cicero said somewhere: "Nature has so formed man's features so that they manifest feelings hidden within our heart: whatever affections we have felt, our eyes always reflect it."[9] This is completely true; in the intelligent being everything betrays his intimate thought; the whole man is completely communicated to his neighbor, and in this way intelligences are engendered. For intelligence does not come into being any more miraculously than anything else; it is a generation like any other. One and the same law presides over every reproduction, whatever its nature be; nothing is engendered except by contact or fusion of beings; no force, no power, acts in an isolated manner. We need only note that the very fact of generation takes place somewhere outside of our direct perception. Thus, just as in the physical world you observe the effects of different natural forces - such as attraction, assimilation, affinity - but, in the final analysis, you come to an incomprehensible fact, the act which confers physical life, so also in the intellectual world we clearly see the effects of different human powers; however, we definitively come to something which escapes our immediate perception, the act which confers intellectual life.

But what is this universal intelligence which corresponds to universal matter and in which moral phenomena occur similarly to the way in which the phenomena of the physical order occur within materiality? It is nothing but the

sum of all the ideas which live on in man's memory. In order to become the patrimony of mankind, the idea must go through a certain number of generations; in other words, the idea falls under the domain of universal reason only in the state of tradition. But here we are not at all referring only to these traditions which history and science furnish the human spirit and which form only a part of universal memory. There are also many ideas which have never been announced before public meetings, have never been sung by rhapsodists, have never been marked either on columns or on parchments; the dates of their appearance have never been ascertained by calculation or by the course of the stars, criticism has never weighed them on its partial balance, but an unknown hand puts them into the interior of souls; the first smile of the mother, the first caress of the father, communciates them to the heart of the newborn. These are the powerful recollections in which the experience of the ages is concentrated: each individual receives them with the air which he breathes. In this milieu, then, all the wonders of intelligence are completed. Undoubtedly, this hidden experience of the centuries does not reach each part of mankind in a complete way; nonetheless, it forms the intellectual substance of the universe, this hidden experience flows in the blood of the human races, it is incorporated with their fiber, and finally it continues those other more mysterious traditions, without origins on earth, which serve as the basis for all societies. It is a known fact that in each tribe, no matter how isolated it has been from the great universal movement, there is always a certain number of more or less exact notions about Supreme Being, about good and evil, about what is just and what is unjust. Without these notions the tribe could not subsist any more than without the base food-products from the soil on which it is grouped and the trees which give it shelter. Where do these notions come from? No one knows; traditions, that is all; there is no way of getting back to their origin: children learned them from their fathers and mothers - this is their entire genealogy. Then the centuries come to descend upon these primitive ideas, experience accumulates upon them, science is founded upon them, and on this invisible basis the human spirit develops. And here then, by means of factual data, we come to the very same point where reasoning leads up to this initial thrust, without which, as we have seen nothing would move in nature and which is just as necessary here as there.

And tell me please, can you conceive of an intelligent being without any kind of an idea? Can you imagine reason in man before he has made use of it? Can you imagine something in the head of a child before he has been taught by those who assisted at his entry into life? Men have seen squat children among forest beasts, whose traits these children adopted, later recover their mental faculties, but these children had not been abandoned from the first days of their existence. The offspring of the most robust animal would inevitably perish, if it were left behind by the female immediately after birth; man, the weakest of all animals, since he requires breast-feeding for six or seven months and his cranium is without bone-protection for several days after birth, could not possibly live through the first stage of life without the security of a mother's hands. This means that these children received the intellectual seed before they were

separated from their parents. If a man were separated from his parents and from every human being from the moment he opened his eyes to the light, if he were not to perceive the glance of a being similar to himself even once and not to hear even a single sound of his voice, and if he were to live on this way up to the age of reason, I guarantee that he would not be different from the mammals which the naturalist places in the same category. Is there anything more absurd than the supposition that each human individual begins his species anew, like the beast? But nontheless, that is the hypothesis which serves as the basis for an entire ideological construction. They assume that this tiny unformed being, still connnected by the umbilical cord to the uterus of the mother, is an intelligent being. But how do they know this? Is it by this galvanic action which causes the child to jump about that you recognize the heavenly gift bestowed upon him? Or is it in this stupid glance, in these tears, in this penetrating cry that you discovered the being created in the image of God? Will he, I ask you, ever have an idea which will not have come to him from the small number of notions placed in his brain by his mother, his nurse, or another human creature during the first days of his existence? The first man was no crying child, but a complete man, therefore, he was fully able to resemble God and really did resemble Him: however, certainly it is not the human embryo which is made in the image of God. The real nature of man consists in the fact that he is the only being capable of receiving an infinite teaching; in this then lies his greatness, his superiority over all creatures. But for him to raise himself up to the condition of an intelligent being, a ray from supreme reason must illuminate his brain. On the day when man was created God spoke with him, and man heard and understood Him: this is the true genesis of human reason; psychology will never find a more profound explanation. Later, he partially lost the ability to hear the voice of God; this was a natural consequence of the gift of unlimited liberty which he had obtained. But he did not lose his recollections of God's first words which resounded in his ear. Then this same word from God, addressed to the first man and transmitted from generation to generation, strikes the child in the crib and introduces him into the intellectual world and really makes him into a thinking being. The same method which God used in order to create man from nothing, He utilizes today in order to create every new thinking being. It is always God who speaks to man through the intermediary of his fellow men.

In that case, the idea of the human being coming into the world with completed intelligence does not have, as you see, any foundation at all either in experience or in abstraction. The great law of the constant and direct influence of a supreme principle is simply reproduced in the general life of man, as it is reproduced in all creation. There it is a force contained in a quantity, here it is a principle contained in a tradition; but it is always the same fact of an exterior influence acting upon the being, no matter what it be, first instantaneously and then in a continuous and permanent manner.

No matter how much we retreat within ourselves, no matter how much we rummage within the most secret depths of our heart, we shall never find anything there other than the thoughts inherited from our ancestors on earth.

This understanding, which men analyze and break into pieces, will always remain simply the understanding of all the generations which succeeded one another from the first man down to us; and when we meditate upon the capabilities of our mind, we simply utilize this same universal reason, for better or worse, in order to observe the part of it which we received in the course of our personal existence. Is that a faculty of the soul? It is an idea, an idea which we find already present in our own mind, without knowing how it came into our mind, and it in turn provokes another. However, in your opinion, where could the first idea come from, if not from this ocean of ideas in which we swim? If we were deprived of contact with other intelligent beings, we would eat grass instead of speculating on our nature. If men do not agree that the thought of man is the thought of mankind, then there is no way to understand what it is. As in the rest of the created world, so in the intellectual world nothing can be understood as perfectly isolated, as if it were self-sufficient. And, finally, if it is true that in the higher or objective reality, man's reason is really only the perpetual reproduction of God's thought, then it is also certain that his present reason or subjective reason is only the reason made by man's reason itself thanks to his free will. It is true that the school does not make any room for all that; there exists only one single and unique reason for the school: the given man is man just as he came forth from the hands of the Creator; created free, he did not misuse his freedom; a voluntary being, he remained the same as inert objects, obedient to an irresistible force; the innumerable errors, the coarse superstitions, generated by him, the crimes with which he soiled himself, nothing of all that left traces on his soul. There he is just as he was on the day when God's breath animated his wordly existence, just as pure, just as chaste, as then, when nothing had polluted his young nature; to the school man is always the same; he was the same at all times, he is the same in all places; as we are so we should be; and this mass of incomplete, fantastic, incoherent thoughts, which we call the human mind, is pure intelligence, the heavenly emanation flowing from God Himself, according to the school; nothing has changed it, nothing has touched it. That is human wisdom.

Nevertheless, the human spirit has always felt the need of reconstituting itself according to an ideal image. Up to the moment of the appearance of Christianity, the human spirit simply did nothing but work on this image which constantly escaped it and which it constantly reworked; this was the great task of antiquity. And man was naturally reduced at that time to seeking the image in himself. But it is surprising that even in our day philosophy, with the highest teachings offered by Christianity before it, still sometimes remains obstinately in the circle in which the ancient world was confined and does not think to look for the model of perfect intelligence somewhere outside of human nature, by turning, for example, towards the sublime doctrine destined to preserve the oldest traditions of the world among men, or towards this admirable book which so clearly carries the stamp of absolute reason, this very same reason which the human spirit seeks and cannot find. Just meditate a little in an honest way about the system which has been revealed and you will be astounded by the great

expression of intellectual perfection which dominates it completely; you will see that all the outstanding minds which you meet there simply form part of one sole vast mind which fills and permeates this world, in which the past, the present, and the future form only one indivisible whole; you will feel that there everything aims at making you understand the nature of a reason which is not subordinated to the conditions of time and space and which man once possessed, which he lost, which he will find again one day, and which was manifested to us in the person of Christ. Note that on this question philosophical spirituality[10] does not differ at all from the opposite system[11], because it is all the same if men hold that human understanding is a *tabula rasa*, in accordance with the old adage of the empirical school, "There is nothing in the mind which is not first in the senses", or if they assume that human understanding acts by means of its own power and repeat with Descartes, "I shut out all my senses and I live"[12], in both cases we always deal with the reason which we find in ourselves today, but not with the reason which was given as a present to us in the beginning; therefore, we could never investigate the genuine spiritual principle at all, but this distorted, disfigured principle, perverted by man's arbitrariness.

Besides, assuredly the most profound and most productive of all the known systems is the one which strives to construct conscientiously an absolutely abstract intelligence, an exclusively intelligent nature, in order to take the intellectual phenomenon into account without going back to the very source of the spiritual principle. But, since it is always man in his present state who furnishes the materials from which this system constructs its model, it happens that this system shows us artificial reason again, but not original reason. The profound thinker[13], the author of this philosophy, did not see that there was no point in representing an intelligence which would only will to seek out and evoke supreme intelligence; an intelligence with a mode of perfectly legitimate activity, as everything which exists, and intelligence whose power would consist only in an infinite tendency to fuse with this other intelligence. If he had started out with that premise, he would have certainly come to the idea of a genuinely pure reason, because reason would have become a simple reflection of absolute reason and the analysis of this reason would have doubtless led him to conclusions of vast importance, and over and above this he would not have fallen into the false teaching about the autonomy of human reason, about some certain imperative law, which exists within our reason itself and gives it the ability to rise up by its own power to the whole fullness of the perfection attainable by it, finally another, even more arrogant philosophy, the philosophy of the omnipotence of the human ego[14] would not have owed it its own existence.

However, even so, this philospher should be treated justly: as is, his creation merits complete respect. We owe all the healthy ideas in the world today to the movement which he gave to philosophical knowledge; and we ourselves are nothing but a logical consequence of his idea. He traced the limits of human reason with steadfast hand; he made it clear that reason had to accept

its two most profound convictions without being able to prove them, namely: the existence of God and the unlimited continuity of its own being; he taught us that a supreme logic exists, which cannot be fitted under our measurements and which is imposed upon us despite ourselves, and that there is a world which is contemporary and different from the one on which we move and that our reason must recognize this world, because of the opposite danger of falling into nothingness, and that from this we should draw all our knowledge, in order then to adapt our knowledge to the real world. But after all, one has to agree that his mission[15] was simply to indicate a new route for philosophy and that if he performed great services for the human spirit it was only in the sense that he forced the human spirit to return back along its road.

In summarizing the results of the study, which we have just made, we arrive at the following: all that exists in the world of ideas comes from a certain number of notions which have been transmitted traditionally, and which do not belong to any intellectual individual any more than the forces of nature belong to any physical individual. Archetypes of Plato, innate ideas of Descartes, *a priori* of Kant, all these diverse elements of thought, which were necessarily recognized by all profound thinkers as in advance of any kind of operation by the soul, as preceding all experimental knowledge and all the appropriate activity of the mind, all these pre-existing seeds of reason without which man would simply be a two-legged and two-armed mammal - no more, no less, and this notwithstanding the great span of his facial angle, nor the volume of his skull, nor the vertical posture of his body - are summed up in the ideas which come to us from the intellectuals who preceded us in life and those who have been charged with the task of introducing us to our personal existence. Infused miraculously into the mind of the first human being on the day of his creation by the same hand which directed the planets upon their elliptical orbits, made inert matter move, and gave life to organic being - these, then, are the ideas which make the intelligence move and push man into the vast circle in which he is meant to travel. Arising as a consequence of the reciprocal contact of spirits and by reason of a mysterious principle which perpetuates the influence of supreme intelligence upon created intelligence, these ideas cause intellectual nature to continue to exist in the same way that a similar contact and an analogous princple causes material nature to continue to exist. Thus, the original thrust continues in all things, and thus it is definitively molded into a constant and immediate providence, which extends its influence upon the whole universality of being.

Once this is established, the study that we still have to do is simple: we only have to investigate the movement of these traditions throughout the history of humanity, in order to see how and where the idea, originally put into the heart of man, was preserved in its wholeness and purity.

LETTER VI

The question may be asked why so many men cultivated the practical and the fine arts amid so many shocks, civil wars, conspiracies, crimes, and inanities in Italy and then in the other Christian states; that is something we do not see under the domination of the Turks.

Voltaire. *Essay on Customs*[1]

Madame,

You have seen in my preceding letters how important it is to understand the movement of thought throughout the passing of the ages. But you should also have seen that, when one becomes permeated with the fundamental idea that there is no truth in man's mind other than that which God desposited there with His own hand when He made man out of nothing, then it becomes impossible to view the movement of the centuries in the same way in which popular history is viewed. For it is found that not only a providence or a perfectly wise intellect presides over the course of events but even an immediate and constant influence of this providence or of this reason upon man's spirit is discernible. If it is once admitted that, in order to be set in motion, the reason of created being originally had to receive an impulse which did not come from its own nature and that its initial ideas, its initial knowledge, could only have been miraculous communications of supreme reason, it follows that during the course of the progress of human reason the force which constituted it in this way must have continued to exercise upon it the same influence which the force utilized at the moment when it imparted its first movement to human reason.

This way of understanding intelligent being in history and its progress must have become familiar to you, Madame, if you fully grasped the things which we agreed upon previously. You have seen that pure, metaphysical reasoning perfectly demonstrates the perpetuity of an exterior influence upon the mind of man. But it is not necessary to have recourse to metaphysics; the conclusion must follow all by itself; it cannot be denied without denying the premises from which it is drawn. So, if man reflects upon the very mode of this continuous influence of divine reason in the moral world, he will find, as we have just seen, that divine reason alone is necessarily consistent with its initial influence and must still take place in such a way as not to destroy the liberty of human reason, nor render the proper activity of reason useless. Thus, there is nothing surprising in the fact that there was a people who had preserved the tradition of God's initial communications in a purer and more definite manner than others and that from time to time men appeared in whom the primitive fact of the moral order was renewed. Remove this people, remove these privileged men and it would be necessary to suppose that divine thought was revealed just as fully and vividly to all people in all epochs within the universal life of man. You realize that this would result in the destruction of all individuality and all freedom in the

world: this would mean the annihilation of the given object. It is evident that individuality and freedom exist only insofar as there is diversity of intelligence, moral powers, and knowledge. Instead of supposing that an extraordinary degree of submission to primitive traditions or a particular capacity for understanding the truth originally infused into the human spirit exists in a nation or in some isolated spirits supposedly charged with guarding this gift, all that one need do is to admit a moral fact perfectly analogous to what takes place incessantly before our eyes, namely, the knowledge that some peoples and individuals are in possession of certain intuitions which other peoples and individuals do not enjoy.

Among the rest of humanity these great traditions are also maintained with more or less purity according to the different situations of the people; and man advanced on the path traced out for him only by the torchlight of these powerful truths which a reason other than his own engendered in his intellect. But there was only one source of light upon earth. This source did not indeed burn like human knowledge, it did not dispense a deceiving burst of light; concentrated at one point, luminous and invisible at one and the same time, like all the world's great mysteries, ardent but hidden like the fire of life, everything was illuminated by this inexpressible light, and everything tended towards this common center, while everything seemed to shine by its luster and to be directed towards the most opposite goals.[2] But when the time of the great catastrophe in the intellectual world arrived, all man's vainly-created powers disappeared at once and amid the general conflagration only the sole tabernacle of eternal truth remained standing. That is how the unity of history should be understood, and that is how this idea elevates itself to the level of a genuine philosophy of time, which evinces intellectual being just as subordinate to a general and absolute law as the rest of creation.

Madame, I would like you to be able to achieve this abstract and religious manner of sensing history; for nothing enlarges our thought and purges our soul as these insights, however obscure, into a providence which dominates the centuries and leads humanity to its final destinies. But meanwhile, let us try to form a philosophy of history which may at least shed some light upon the vast region of human memories, a light like the bright dawning of day for us. We shall profit all the more from this preparatory study of history, since it in itself can supply us with a complete system which could, if necessary, satisfy us, if by chance something happens to halt our subsequent progress. Moreover, please remember, Madame, that I am not addressing you from the pulpit and that these letters are simply the continuation of our interrupted conversations which provided me with so many sweet moments and which, I enjoy reiterating, were means of genuine consolation for me at a time when I had great need of them. Do not expect to find me more didactic than usual this time; be prepared to contribute something of your own to this meditation.

You have undoubtedly already noticed that the present inclination of the human spirit is evidently aimed at giving every type of knowledge an historical

form. In meditations upon the philosophical foundations of historical thought, men cannot fail to recognize that today history is called upon to achieve an importance infinitely higher than it has had up to now. It may be said that today the human spirit thrives only on history, that the human spirit keeps turning incessantly back to the past and continually tries to gain new strength by relating it to its memories, the contemplating of its past development, the study of the forces which regulated and directed its advance throughout the centuries. This change in the attitude of modern science is certainly a very fortunate one. It is time to realize that human reason is not simply constituted by the force which it has in the narrow present, but that there is another force in it which, by integrating both past and future into a single thought, forms its true being and places it in its genuine activity.

But, Madame, do you not find, in general, that traditional or narrative history is necessarily incomplete? Is it not true that this history always contains only what man's memory retains? But it does not retain all that happens in the world. So, the present historical point of view could not satisfy reason, since it proves nothing. Despite the philosophical spirit which had permeated history in our day, the useful works of criticism and the help which the natural sciences, astronomy, geology and even genuine physics, have lent to history lately, nonetheless, as you see, history has still not been able to attain either *unity* or this lofty morality which would be derived from a distinct insight into the general law within moral, historical movement. The human spirit always strives towards this great goal in its contemplating of past centuries, but, as for the superficial lessons otherwise drawn from history, these lessons of banal philosophy, these examples of some sort of virtue - as if virtue were displayed upon the world's great theatre, as if the essential traits of virtue were not directed at remaining hidden - this trivial psychological morality of history[3] which has never made a single honest man but a host of scoundrels and fools of all types and which only serves to perpetuate the world's miserable comedy - all that has diverted reason away from the genuine lessons which human traditions ought to provide. As long as the Christian religious spirit dominated science, a profound thought, even though badly articulated, communicated something of its original holy inspiration to these studies. But at this epoch historical criticism was still so incomplete, so many facts, especially those from primitive times, were still preserved within humanity's memory in so disfigured a manner that all the religious lights were incapable of dispersing this profound darkness, and history, though illuminated by superior enlightenment, did not advance in any less a mundane manner. Today a rational way of envisaging history should undoubtedly produce a perfectly positive result. The spirit of our century demands an entirely new philosophy of history which would not resemble the present philosophy of history any more than the learned analyses of astronomy today resemble the series of gnomic observations by Hipparchus and the rest of the ancient astronomers. However, men must realize that there will never be enough facts to demonstrate everything and that we have enough of them to

enable us to presage many things since the times of Moses and Herodotus. No matter what sort of factual compilation men may make, these will never lead to certitude; certitude can only result from the way in which the facts are understood. So, for example, the experimentation of centuries, which had taught Kepler the laws of planetary motion, was not enough to reveal the general law of nature to him; this discovery[4] was reserved to a kind of extraordinary revelation, a pious meditation. Madame, that is the history which we must try to understand.

First of all, what is the significance of these rapprochements between centuries and nations, hoarded up by vain erudition? Is it all these linguistic, ethnic, and intellectual genealogies? Will not a blind and obstinate philosophy[5] always clear them out of the way by its old argument about the general uniformity of human nature? Will it not deny all these marvelous interrelationships of the times by using its favorite theory, i.e., the natural development of the human spirit without any traces of providence, without any cause other than the mechanical force of its own nature? This philosophy considers the human spirit nothing more than a snowball which grows by rolling, that is all. Besides, from its own point of view this philosophy either sees progress and a natural perfection everywhere as something inherent in human nature or else simply finds a motiveless, meaningless movement.

Depending upon the different intellectual traits, whether somber and hopeless or else hopeful and amenable, this philosophy either sees man simply fluttering about imbecilely like a fly in the sun, or else rising and always advancing thanks to his sublime nature, but it is always man and nothing but man. This willfully ignorant philosophy learns nothing from the physical world which it imagines that it knows, except what is offered to the vain curiosity of the mind and the senses; the great streams of light which this world gives off never reach this philosophy and finally, even if it should decide upon the acknowledgement of a plan, a design, or a reason in the totality of things, the submission of human intelligence to it, and the acceptance of all the consequences resulting from it with reference to the phenomena of universal moral order, such a task remains impossible as long as this philosophy is what it is. Thus, there is no point either in linking up the times or in working perpetually upon factual material: men must try to characterize the great epochs in history from a moral viewpoint and attempt to determine the traits of each age with perfect impartiality in accordance with the law of lofty practical reason. Moreover, if men pay strict attention to this, they will find that historical data has been completed, people have recited all their traditions, and if one day past epochs may be clarified in better fashion, here again it will occur not by means of this critical method, which is only capable of digging up the old ashes of people, but rather by means of some purely rational procedure; as for real facts, there are no more of them to be found. *The sole task of history today consists in meditating.*

If we admit this, history would fit naturally into the general system of philosophy and would henceforth form an integral part of it. A number of things which would be left to novelists and poets would then, of course, be severed from history. But there would still be much which would surge up from the nebulous atmosphere in which it still lies, in order to be put at the most evident heights of the new system. These things would no longer receive their character of truth uniquely from the chronicle, but henceforth moral reasoning would imprint the stamp of certitude upon them in the same way that geometric reasoning reduced to formulae and to articles of faith these axioms of natural philosophy which were discovered by experience and observation. For example, that would be the case with reference to the epoch still so misunderstood, not because of any absence of data or monuments, but because of an absence of thought; I mean the first centuries of our Christian era in which all history culminates, in which everything terminates and begins, and it can be said, without fear of exaggeration, that humanity's entire past is intermingled with all of its future in that period.

There will come a day when historical thought will no longer be able to remain indifferent in the face of this imposing spectacle made up of the initial greatness of men reduced to dust, as well as all the future greatness contained within it. This is also the case with reference to the long period which followed and continued this age of mankind's regeneration, a period so misrepresented not long ago by philosophic prejudice and fanaticism; then such lively lights were concealed in the depths of the most opaque darkness, then such prodigious moral forces were preserved and flourished amid the apparent intellectual immobility, and we have begun to understand this only since the human spirit has taken a new turn.

In this way then this period may be seen in all its admirable reality and with all its great teaching. Then gigantic figures, lost in the crowd of historical personalities at this moment, would walk out from the shadow which envelops them, whereas many renowned characters, lavishly venerated by men for a long time in a criminal or imbecilic fashion, would fall forever into oblivion. For example, this would be the case with respect to the new fate of some Biblical personalities, misunderstood or neglected by human reason, and that of some pagan sages whom human reason surrounded with more glory than they deserved. Take Moses and Socrates, for example. Men would grasp once and for all that the former gave the true God to men, whereas the latter simply bequeathed them pusillanimous and disquieting doubt. As for David and Marcus Aurelius, the former is the perfect model of very holy heroism, whereas the latter is basically simply a curious example of artificial greatness and pompous virtue. Men would no longer remember Cato tearing out his entrails except as a means of justly evaluating the philosophy which inspired this furious virtue and miserable greatness in man. I believe that amid the glories of paganism Epicurus' name would be freed from the prejudice which blemished it and new interest would be attached to his historical position.

Other great notables would suffer a new lot in the same way. The Stagirite's name[6], for example, would be pronounced henceforth only with a kind of abhorrence, and Mohammed's, with profound respect. The former would be considered as an angel of darkness who repressed all the forces for good in mankind during a number of centuries; the latter as a beneficent being, one of those who contributed the most towards the realization of the plan conceived of by *divine wisdom* for the salvation of mankind. Finally, I have to tell you that a sort of infamy would become linked with Homer's name. Plato's judgment upon this corruptor of man, motivated as it was by his religious instinct, would no longer be viewed as one of his famous utopian sallies, but rather as one of his admirable anticipations of future thought. One day men must learn to blush upon recalling this guilty enchanter who contributed to the degradation of human nature in such a terrible way; men must sorrowfully make repentance for the incense which they have lavished upon this flatterer of their vilest passions, this man who soiled the sacred tradition of truth and filled men's hearts with filth in order to please. All these ideas which remain more or less lifeless in some independent brains would henceforth be irrevocably set in the moral feeling of humanity and would become much like axioms of common sense.

But in this sense, one of the most important lessons to be derived from history would consist in imbedding within humanity's memory the respective ranks of people who have disappeared from the world and in filling living people's consciousness with a sense of their particular mission. Each nation should perceive its present actual existence through a clear understanding of the different epochs in its past life and should be able to predict somewhat the course of its own future development. In this way, the people's genuine national consciousness would be composed of a certain number of positive ideas, evident truths deduced from their recollections, strong convictions which would more or less dominate all their minds and would urge them along towards a similar goal. In that case the nationality groups, which have simply divided men up to now, would combine with one another in order to produce one harmonic and universal result, since they would be divested of their blindness and their impassioned interest; then all people would link arms and march together towards a single goal.

I know that our wise men have promised this intellectual coalescence to philosophy and to the progress of universal enlightenment; however, if men reflect upon the fact that the people, though composite beings, are nonetheless truly moral beings just as individuals are and that, as a result, a similar law presides over the intellectual life of both, then it will be seen that *the activity of the great human families necessarily depends upon this personal feeling which causes them to conceive of themselves as separate from the rest of humanity with their own unique existence and individual interest. This feeling is a necessary element of world consciousness and constitutes, so to say, the ego of the collective human being.* Therefore, in our hopes for future happiness and definite perfection we could not initially isolate the great individual nationalities

any more than their less important composite parts. We must accept them as principles and means for reaching a perfect state.

Thus, the cosmopolitan future of philosophy is only an idle dream. First, men must concentrate upon drawing up a set of domestic morals different from their political morality; people have to learn how to know themselves first and how to evaluate themselves just as individuals, so that they may recognize their own vices and virtues; so that they may learn to admit the faults and the crimes which they have committed, and repair the evil which they have done, or else to persevere upon the good path which they are following. Those are the inevitable moral conditions leading to genuine perfectibility for the masses, just as for individuals; in order to fulfill their destinies in the world, both have to look back upon their past lives and discover their future in the past.

So you see that historical criticism would no longer be reduced to satisfying vain curiosity but would become the most august of magistrates. It would exercise implacable justice upon illustriousness and greatness in every century, scrutinize all the famous men of glory, explain every phantom and every historical illusion, and would concentrate upon destroying the false images encumbering man's memory, so that reason could deduce certain consequences for the present from the past, made accessible to reason in its true light, and could look into the infinite expanses of the future.

I believe then that an immense glory, the glory of Greece, would almost completely pass away; I believe that a day will come when man's moral thinking will become permeated simply by a holy sadness for this deceptive and illusory earth from which the genius of deceit disseminated seduction and falsehood upon the rest of the world for such a long time. No longer would the pure soul of a Fénelon[7] be seen nourishing itself indolently upon voluptuous images created by the most frightful depravation that ever befell the human spirit, nor would powerful intellectuals allow themselves to be overpowered by sensual inspirations from Plato[8]; but, in contrast to this, the old, almost forgotten thoughts of some religious minds would come into their own, namely those powerful thinkers and genuine heroes of thought who indicated with one hand the path which society should pursue at the dawn of the new society, while with the other hand they fought against the agonizing monster of polytheism; the prodigious conceptions of these wise men, to whom God had committed the preservation of His first Words admirably and unexpectedly applicable to society. And in the unique visions of the future granted to some chosen men people would begin to note in particular the basic, conscious manifestation of the absolute interrelationship between historic periods, as well as the fact that the prophecies do not really refer *to any definite epoch* but are lessons referring indiscriminately to all historical periods. Moreover, men would find that all you have to do is to look around yourself, as it were, in order to see their perpetual fulfillment taking place within the successive phases of society as the daily, luminous manifestations of the eternal law in the moral world, in such a way that

the reality of prophecy would thus become as palpable as the very reality of the events which carry us onward.[9]

Finally, here is the most important lesson that history should impart to us, and within our system, in helping us to understand this universal life of intelligent being, which alone can provide the answer to the *human enigma*, this lesson epitomizes the entire philosophy of history: instead of being satisfied with the meaningless system of the *mechanical* perfection of his nature, so manifestly contradicted by the experience of all the centuries, man should realize that, when abandoned, he himself has never advanced except towards an indefinite degradation. Though from time to time there have been progressive epochs among all people and lucid moments in man's universal life, sublime flashes of reason, prodigious efforts of man's nature - which if true - yet there is no proof of any permanent and continuous advancement of society in general, and only in the society of which we are members, namely, the Christian society, which was not made by men's hands, can one perceive a genuine, ascending movement and a real principle of true progress. We have doubtless assimilated what the spirit of the ancients imagined or discovered before us; we have made use of it and in this way reforged the broken link in the great historical chain, but it does not follow that people would have reached this present stage of development without the wholly spontaneous and unique historical phenomenon[10] which was outside of the usual generation of human ideas, wholly unrelated to any natural chain of events, and which separates the ancient world from the new world.

Thereafter, Madame, would the wise man look upon the past, back to the movement when a supernatural power imparted an entirely new movement upon the human spirit, and his imagination would recall the world in its true light as corrupt, bloody, and false. The wise man would then recognize that the progress of people and generations, which he had so admired, had really led simply to a brutishness infinitely below that of people whom we call savages and he would thus realize clearly how imperfect the civlizations of the ancient world were; he would see that there was no principle of continuity and permanence in them. He would say to himself: Profound Egyptian wisdom, charming Ionian art, austere Roman virtues, dazzling Alexandrian magnificence, what has become of you? Your brilliant civilizations, as old as the world, nurtured by all the powers on earth, associated in every glory, greatness, and domination in the world, and finally linked to the most enormous power[11] which ever weighed down upon the earth with its world empire, how could you have been annihilated?[12] What did all this work of centuries mean then, all these superb efforts of intelligent nature, if new people who had not participated in it in any way were one day to destroy all of it, raze this magificent edifice, and plough upon its *ruins!* Had man built that only to see all his own work reduced to dust one day? Had he accumulated so much only to lose it all in one day? Had he risen so high only to fall even lower than his initial state?

But do not be mistaken about it, Madame, it was not the barbarians who destroyed the ancient world; it was already a stinking cadaver; the barbarians simply tossed its dust into the wind. Before this happened, these same barbarians had attacked the ancient societies without being able to subdue them; history scarcely remembers their first invasions. The truth is that the principle of life which had supported human society up to that time was exhausted, and the material interest, or, if you prefer, the real interest which had until then solely determined the social movement had, so to say, completed its task and had concluded the preliminary education for mankind. For, no matter how much human thought tries to quit its terrestrial sphere, it can only raise itself up from time to time to the superior regions in which the genuine principle of social life is to be found, and, as a result, human thought can never give society its definitive stability. The entire history which I am relating to you is contained in this truth.

Unfortunately men have habitually seen only separated states in Europe for too long a time. As a result, the stability of the new society and its immense superiority over the ancient one could not be fully appreciated. Men overlooked the fact that for a number of centuries this society formed a genuine federal system, or rather a single people, and that this sytem was dissolved only by the Reformation. But when the Reformation came, the society had already been completely constructed for eternity. Before this deplorable event European people considered themselves as part of one single social body, geographically divided into different states, but morally united as one. For a long time they had no public law other than the decrees of the Church; the wars being waged then were regarded as domestic wars; a sole, unique interest animated this entire world, a sole thought inspired it. That is what makes the history of the Middle Ages so profoundly philosophical; it is literally the history of the human spirit. The moral movement, the movement of thought accomplished everything; purely political events always occupied only a secondary place in the whole picture, and this can be proved precisely by these religious wars which the philosophy of the past century found so horrifying. Voltaire correctly remarks that religious convictions have caused wars only among Christians[13], and then he proceeds to talk nonsense in his usual way.

However, when you discover a unique fact in history, it is worth trying to understand what produced it and what resulted from it. Tell me, could the reign of thought be established on earth in any way other than by imparting to this principle of thought all its reality, all its intensity? The appearance of things has changed, to be sure, but this is the result of the schism; in shattering the unity of thought, it also shattered the unity of society, but the foundation is certainly the same; Europe is still Christendom, no matter what it does. Europe will certainly never return to the historical state of its age of youth and faith, but there is also no doubt that one day the lines which separate Christian people will be obliterated once again and that the original principle of modern society will become manifest more energetically than ever under a new form. This is an article of faith for a Christian; he is not permitted to doubt about this future, any

more than about the past upon which his faith is founded; why, it is a proven fact to every halfway serious intellectual. Who knows whether this day is not closer than men think? Today there certainly is a religious movement at work deep within men's souls, there are changes in the march of science, the supreme power in this century, and from time to time something solemn and contemplative is noticeable within men's souls. Who knows, these may be the harbingers of some great moral and social phenomena which will lead to a general revolution among intelligent beings, whereby articles of faith which are now simply part of man's promised destiny would become probabilities, certitudes belonging to universal reason.

The way to study the special characteristics of the new society is to concentrate upon this great family of Christian people, European society. There you will find the elements of stability and genuine progress, which set it apart from every other social system in the world; all that we can learn from history is concealed right there. Thus, we can see that despite all the revolutions which took place in modern society, it has not lost any of its vitality - in fact, every day it grows in strength, every day we notice new progressive forces which are even stronger than those which developed initially within it. For example, the Arabs, the Tatars, and the Turks were not only incapable of destroying it, but they even helped to consolidate it. You know that these first two nations attacked Europe before the invention of gunpowder, which proves that it is not guns which have preserved Europe from destruction. At the same time one of these peoples invaded the two societies which survived from the ancient world, namely India and China. It is true that these two societies also did not perish, thanks to their immense populations, the inert yet reactionary masses, but their natural uniqueness was lost, the old, life-giving principle was driven out to the extremities of their social body, with the result that the death sentence was every bit as definite in their case.

The spectacle offered by India and China today should provide us with an important lesson. For, by studying them, we become, as it were, contemporaries to a world which has left only some dust around us for us to look at. Thus, we can learn what would have become of humanity without the new impetus imparted to it elsewhere by an omnipotent hand. And notice, since time immemorial China apparently possessed the three great instruments which have, so men say, done the most to accelerate the progress of the human spirit in our lands: the compass, the printing-press and gunpowder. Well, what good were they? Did the Chinese circumnavigate the globe? Did they discover a new hemisphere? Do they possess a literature more vast than the one we had before the invention of printing? Have they had Fredericks and Bonapartes in the deadly art of war, as we have had? For proof of the impotency and miserable condition inherent in every society not founded upon the truth immediately issuing from supreme reason, do we need to look any further than the abject state to which India was reduced by conquest, first by the Tatars and then by the English? I am personally convinced that this dull Chinese immobility and this extraordinary degradation of the Indian people, the standard-bearers of the most

ancient natural knowledge and of the germs for all the human sciences, provides us with a specific lesson and that is why God preserved them on earth.[14]

Madame, you have often heard men *attribute* the fall of the Roman empire to moral decay and the despotism resulting from it. However, in this universal upheaval, it is not only Rome that fell; the entire ancient civilization collapsed. The Egypt of the Pharoahs, the Greece of Pericles, the second Egypt of Lagides, and the whole Hellenic empire of Alexander which extended beyond the Indus river, finally, Judaism itself after it became Hellenized - all that was fused in the Roman masses and formed one single piece, one unique society which represented all previous generations since creation and contained all the moral and intellectual powers developed in human nature up to that time. Then it is not simply an empire which fell; human society was annihilated and began again. Since the globe has been circumnavigated by Europe, since a new world, arisen from the ocean, has been made over by Europe, and since the remaining human populations have become so subjugated to her that they exist, as it were, only by Europe's kind permission, it is easy to understand what happened on earth when the old edifice fell and the new arose miraculously in its place: at that time the moral element in the universe received a new law, a new organization. Materials from the ancient world were certainly used in the construction of the new, for supreme reason could not destroy its own handiwork; the material basis of the moral order always remained the same; besides, completely new human stock, drawn from groups unexplored by ancient civilizations, was again furnished by Providence. The energetic, concentrated, northern qualities were combined with the expansive southern and eastern powers; the cold, earnest thought from severe climates fused with the warm, jocular thought from temperate climates. It looked as if all the intellectual powers strewn out across the world came together and mingled on that day, in order to beget whole generations of ideas whose elements had been enshrouded in the most mysterious depths of the human heart up to that time.

But neither the plan for the edifice nor the cement which connected the diverse materials was the work of man: it is the idea of truth come down from heaven which accomplished everything. That is what we have to understand and that is the immense fact which a purely historical reasoning process could never clarify in a satisfactory intellectual way through a mere recourse to all the human activities to be found within this epoch. This is the pivot upon which the entire historical sphere turns; this is what explains and proves the whole phenomenon of the education of mankind. The magnificence of the event, its intimate, necessary, wholly providential connection with its antecedents and its consequences would alone be enough, I believe, to place it beyond the ordinary course of human affairs, but the direct effects of this event upon the intellect, the new enriching forces, the new needs created by it, and above all, this general intellectual improvement caused by it, which made man eager for truth and capable of understanding truth in every situation - that is what stamps this

historical period completely with an astounding character of providence and supreme reason.

Moreover, notice, even if human reason frequently reverts to things which no longer would, could, or do exist, yet is not human reason basically attached to this moment at all times, no matter what? For the present, is not the whole consciousness of universal intelligence to be found in essence within the new moral order? Does not this portion of universal intelligence, which dominates and carries along the rest of the masses today, really date from the first day of our era? Is not the world spirit the Christian spirit today? I do not know, perhaps everyone cannot see the dividing line which separates us from the ancient world. As for me, all my philosophy, all my ethics, all my religion lies in that concept. There will come a time, I hope, when all the reversions to paganism, such as the one brought about in the fifteenth century, improperly called, I believe, the literary renaissance with all its consequences and results, will be remembered by modern people in the same way that they recall some foolish, guilty, youthful drunkenness which has to be erased from the memory of the world in every possible way.

Note also that by a kind of optical illusion men think of antiquity as a succession of ages with end, whereas the modern world seems to have begun only yesterday. However, the history of the ancient world, for example, as far back as the establishment of the Pelagians in Greece, takes in a space of time which surpasses the duration of our era by but one century more or less. But the historical time-periods are even shorter than that. During this short space of time how many societies perished in the ancient world! Whereas, in the history of modern people, one simply sees the geographical changes of state boundaries, the society and the people remain intact. I do not have to tell you that such facts as the expulsion of the Moors in Spain, the destruction of the American tribes, and the annihilation of the Tatars in Russia simply help to support the principle. So the fall of the Ottoman empire which already resounds in our ears is again going to offer the spectacle of one of these great catastrophes which Christian people are never going to suffer. Then it will be the turn of other non-Christian people who live at the utmost boundaries of our system. This is the circle of the omnipotent action of sacred truth; in one case by repulsing groups of people, in another case by including them within its circumference, the circle of omnipotent action of sacred truth is enlarged incessantly and brings us near to the time of fulfillment. The destinies of mankind are achieved in this way.

The indifference with which men have treated modern civilization for such a long time is a thing to marvel at. But you see that a proper understanding and perfect explanation of it would be, as it were, the solution to the whole social problem. So, for better or worse, men must go back to this civilization in their most comprehensive, general consideration about the philosophy of history. Really, does it not include the product of all past ages? Will the ages to come be anything else but the result of this civilization? For, moral being is nothing but a product of history and one which history has to complete. Has the fund of worldwide ideas ever existed in so concentrated a manner as in the present

Christian society? Has a single thought in the universal history of mankind ever embraced the total activity of man's nature as in our day?

First of all, we are positively the inheritors of all that mankind has ever said or done; there is no place on earth which has escaped the influence of our ideas; indeed, there is actually only one single intellectual force in the whole universe. Thus, all the fundamental questions in the philosophy of history are necessarily contained in the single question of European civilization. But when men disseminate their words about human perfectibility and the progress of the human spirit, they think that they have said and explained everything - as if man has done nothing all the time but progress without ever stopping or going backwards, as if the natural intellectual movement never experienced a standstill or retrogression, nothing but development and progress. But, if this were so, why have these people whom I just mentioned before never budged as long as we have known them? They say that the Asiatic nations are stationary. But why are they stationary? To reach their present-day condition, they apparently must have done what we did - seek, invent, and discover. Then why is it that, once they had reached a certain point, they abruptly halted and have not been able to conceive or create anything new since then?[15]

The answer is very simple: the progress of human nature is not at all indefinite, as men imagine; there is a limit beyond which it could never pass. That is why the societies of the ancient world have not always advanced, why Egypt, since Herodotus' visit, did not make any progress up to the time of the Greek domination, and why the beautiful, brilliant Roman world which united all the cultures of that time from the columns of Hercules to the Ganges had reached that stage of immobility necessarily terminating all purely human progress at the moment when a new idea came to enlighten the human spirit. If men meditate ever so little upon this fruitful moment without classic prejudices, the scourge of history, they will certainly note that, besides the excessive depravity of morals, the loss of all feeling for virtue, liberty, and love of country, and besides a genuine decadence in all branches of human knowledge, there was a complete stagnation in everything else. Their minds were incapable of motion except within a narrow, miserable circle through which they broke only in order to precipitate into stupid disorder. Once material interest is satisfied, man no longer advances; he is lucky if he does not go backwards. This is a fact. Do not be mistaken about it, in Greece as in India, in Rome as in Japan, in Mexico as in China all intellectual labor, however prodigious it might have been or may still be, did and still does aim at only one thing. The most exalted and exuberant aspects in the teachings and intellectual habits of the East, far from contradicting this general fact, on the contrary confirm it.

For who can fail to note that all these disordered intellectual outbursts originate simply from illusions and delusions about the material nature of man? All that you have to realize is that this earthly interest, an eternal spur for all human activity, is not confined solely to sensual appetites, but that it is quite simply the general need for well-being which manifests itself in all kinds of

ways depending upon the level of society and upon various, diverse local causes, but, nonetheless, it never definitely rises to the level of a purely moral need. The Christian society alone is genuinely animated by interests in thought and in the soul. And that is precisely what constitutes the perfectibility of modern people and that is where the mystery of civilization is to be found. No matter how this other interest occurs there, you will find that it is always subordinated to this powerful force which masters all the faculties in man's soul, places all the powers of reason and feeling at its disposal, and leads everything within man towards the fulfillment of his destiny.

This type of interest could assuredly never be satisfied; it is infinite and that is why Christian people must always advance. And, even though the goal aimed at has nothing in common with that finite well-being which is the only one accessible to non-Christian people, yet Christian people find finite well-being also along their route and utilize it; and the joys of life which other people seek exclusively, Christians also gain finally, but through another life according to the words of the Saviour: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his justice and all will be added unto you."[16] In this way the enormous development which the dominating spirit communicates to all the intellectual capabilities within these people also showers them with all temporal as well as spiritual goods. Besides, it is certain that a Chinese immobility, a Greek decadence, or even less likely, any total annihilaiton of civilization will never become part of our experience. Just look around to be convinced of that. The entire globe would have to be overthrown from top to bottom, a second upheaval similar to the one which gave the globe its present form, would have to be repeated, in order to destroy the present civilization. A total destruction of our culture would be inconceivable with anything less than a second cataclysm on a universal scale. And should one of the two hemispheres be totally engulfed, whatever of our civilization would remain in the other would be enough to regenerate the human spirit. Never, no, never will the idea destined to conquer the universe halt or perish. To do that, a specific decree from Him Who put it in the human soul would have to smash it from on high. Finally, Madame, I hope that you will find that this philosophical conclusion derived from meditation upon history is more positive, more evident, and more instructive, if I am right, than all those conclusions peculiarly drawn from the old, banal history[17] taken from the panorama of the centuries by working out the effects of soil, race, and especially the famous theory of human *perfectibility.*

Do you know, Madame, who is responsible for the fact that the influence of Christianity upon society and upon the development of the human spirit is not yet sufficiently understood and appreciated? It is the fault of those who shattered the moral unity; those who date Christianity only from their arrival upon the scene; those who call themselves reformers. It is clear that they are not at all interested in following the march of Christianity throughout the Middle Ages. This entire immense period is simply a void in time for them. Then how could they possibly understand the education of modern people? Believe me, nothing

has done more to disfigure the image of modern history than the Protestant point of view. From that comes the exaggerated importance attached to the literary renaissance, a thing which, strictly speaking, never took place, since literature was never wholly lost; that is also why men imagined myriad diverse causes for progress which have basically had only an extremely secondary influence or which simply arise out of the unique cause of everything. That is why men have sought the causes for people's progress everywhere except where they really are and have thus denied Christianity. But, since a less narrow, loftier-minded philosophy has concentrated upon the study of this interesting period through a fortunate return to the past, many new things which were ignored up to now have been suddenly revealed to human thought, so that even the most obstinate ill-will could no longer resist these new factors. If it is in God's providence that men will be enlightened in this fashion, the time is not far off when a great light is going to flash in the obscurity which still covers the history of modern society, and this new philosophy of history, which I want to give you some idea of, is certainly soon going to be understood by men.[18]

You must admit that this stubbornness on the part of Protestants is strange. In their minds, since the second or third centuries Christianity ceased to exist except for that which was absolutely necessary so as to avoid utter destruction. They look upon the superstition and ignorance of these eleven or twelve centuries in such a way that they see an idolatry there even more deplorable than that of the pagans. In their opinion, if the Waldensians[19] had not come along, the thread of sacred tradition would have been entirely broken, and, if Luther had not come, Christ's religion would have ceased to exist within a few more days. But, please tell me, how can one recognize the divine seal in this weak, fleeting, lifeless doctrine which they make out of Christianity? How can one see the work of God in this passing, lying doctrine which, instead of regenerating humanity and permeating it with new life, as it promised, has appeared upon earth only in order to pass away, has been born only to die, or simply in order to serve as an instrument for human passions? Did the fate of religion hang then upon Leo X's desire to finish St. Peter's basilica? In their minds if he had not caused indulgences to be sold in Germany for that purpose at that time, there would scarcely be any vestiges of Christianity left in our day. I do not know of anything which would allow you to see the radical vice of the Reformation better than this narrow and niggardly way of considering the revealed religion. Does it not contradict the very words of Jesus Christ, as well as the whole idea of His religion? If His Word is supposed to last longer than sky or earth and He Himself be incessantly among us, then how could the temple which He had erected with His own hands have been upon the brink of collapse? How could this temple have remained empty for such a long time like an abandoned house ready to fall in ruins?

However, one must admit that the Protestants were consequential. They set all of Europe on fire, then cut the bonds uniting Christian people in one single family; they spread so much misery and blood upon earth, because, as they saw

it, Christianity was on the point of perishing. Did not everything have to be sacrificed in order to save it? But look at the facts: on the contrary, there is nothing which proves the divinity of our religion better than its perpetual and incessant influence upon the human spirit - an influence which far from ceasing completely has, on the contrary, never slowed down for a moment in its efforts to fit in with the times and to combine with the needs of different peoples and centuries. In this regard reason is satisfied best by this spectacle of its sovereign power which is constantly active amid the infinite obstacles which have not stopped arousing vice within our nature and the fatal, pagan heritage.

Then what is the meaning of the assertion that the Catholic Church had degenerated since the time of the primitive Church? Did not the church fathers deplore the corruption among Christians after the third century? And were not the same complaints always issued in every century and at every council? Did not true piety always raise its voice against the abuses and vices of the clergy and against encroachments by the hierarchy? There is nothing more admirable than the brilliant illuminations which shot forth from time to time from the depths of the dark night covering the world: sometimes there were examples of the most sublime virtue, at other times there were marvelous effects of the faith upon the spirit of peoples and individuals; the Church gathered all that in and made it part of its strength and richness; thus the eternal edifice was erected in the way which could best provide it with the form needed. Naturally the primitive purity of Christianity could not be preserved for all time; Christianity had to pass through all the phases of corruption and to bear all the characteristics which the freedom of human reason had to imprint upon it. Besides, the perfection of the apostolic church was that of a small community lost in the great pagan community; as a result, the perfection of the apostolic Church could not be that of universal society of mankind. The Golden Age of the Church, we know, was that of its greatest sufferings, the age in which the work of sorrow was operating to found the new order, the age in which the blood of the Savior still streamed; it is absurd to dream of the return to a state of things which resulted only from the immense miseries which burdened the first Christians.

But do you want to know what caused this reformation which boasts of having rediscovered Christianity? You realize that it is one of the greatest questions which historical science can pose. The Reformation set the world back again into the disunity of paganism; it reestablished great national entities, isolated men's souls and minds, plunged man again into the solitude of passion, and tried to remove all the mutual understanding and harmony which the Saviour brought into the world. The Reformation may have accelerated the movement of the human spirit, but from the consciousness of intelligent being it also removed the fertile, sublime idea of universality and unity, the unique source for the true progress of mankind, i.e., infinite progress. The real effect of every schism within the Christian world is the rupture of this mysterious unity which contains the whole divine idea of Christianity and all its power. For that reason the ancient or primitive Church within which Christianity matured will never compromise with the new, separated sects. Too bad for the Church and for the

world, if the fact of the schism is ever recognized by the legitimate authority! All would soon return to a chaos of human ideas, multiplicity of lies, ruin, and dust. The visible, palpable stability of truth is alone capable of preserving the reign of the spirit upon earth. The empire of thought acquires permanence and continuity only by working itself out in the given forms of human nature. And then, what would become of the sacrament of communion, this marvelous discovery of Christian reason which, as it were, materializes souls in order to unify them better, should men no longer desire a visible union and should they be content with an inner community of convictions without any external reality! What good is it to unite with the Saviour, if we are separated from one another? I am not surprised that ferocious Calvin, the assassin of Servetus[20], the bully Zwingli[21], and the tyrant Henry VIII with his hypocrite Cranmer[22] misunderstood the powers of love and union contained in the great sacrament; however, what I cannot understand is that profound, genuinely religious spirits often found among the Lutherans who are, moreover, not dogmatic about this despoliation of the Eucharist which their founder combatted with such ardor, could be so strangley mistaken about the nature of this great institution and that they could abandon themselves to deplorable Calvinist teaching.

You must agree that there is a strange taste for ruination among the Protestant churches. It could be said that they yearn only for their own annihilation, that they seem to fear becoming too full of life, and that they refuse anything which could make them last too long. Is this then the teaching of Him who came to bring life on earth and who conquered death? Or are we already in heaven, so that we can reject the conditions of earthly order with impunity? And is this order anything but the combination of the pure thoughts on the part of the intelligent being with the things necessary for their existence? But, the first of these necessities is society, the contact of minds, the fusion of ideas and feelings. It is only by finding a satisfactory solution within society that truth comes alive, descends from the region of speculation to that of reality, moves from thought to *fact*, and finally secures the character of a natural force so that its effect becomes as certain as that of every natural force. But how could all that occur in an ideal society which would exist only in man's desires and imagination? That is what the Protestant church is: *invisible just like nothingness.*

The day on which all Christian sects will reunite will be the one on which the schismatic churches penitently and humbly decide to acknowledge, in sack and cinders, that by separating themselves from the mother Church they rejected the effects of this sublime prayer of the Saviour: Holy Father preserve in thy name those whom thou hast given me, so that they may be one as we are one.[23] Were the papacy, as they suggest, a human institution - as if things of this stature could be made by human hands - what difference would it make? It is certain that in this time the papacy resulted essentially from the spirit of Christianity and that today as a constant visible sign of unity, it is an even greater sign of reunion. On these grounds why not confer precedence over all Christian

society upon it? Besides, who will not admire its unique destinies? Despite all its vicissitudes, all its disasters, its own faults and sins, all the attacks of non-believers, and even despite the incredible triumph of nonbelief, there it stands firmer than ever! Stripped of its human pomp, the papacy has become stronger, and its continued duration is particularly strengthened and guaranteed by human indifference towards it. In times past it was the veneration on the part of the Christian world which gave the papacy its permanence, a certain instinct in the nations which allowed them to see the cause of their temporal and eternal salvation within it; now it is the papacy's humble attitude amid the powers on earth.

But the papacy always perfectly fulfills its aim; it *centralizes* Christian thoughts today, attracts them to one another, reminds even those who have disavowed the unity of the supreme principle of their faith, and always majestically towers above the world of material interests by means of this characteristic divine vocation totally imprinted upon it. No matter how little men seem to be concerned with the papacy now, just let it disappear suddenly from earth by some impossible quirk - then you would see all these religious sects fall into a frenzy, were this living monument in the history of the great community to cease to stand before them. Everywhere men would seek to recover this visible unity which they now treat so lightly, but nowhere would it be found. And, certainly, Christian reason would lose the present, valuable, full inner awareness of its future which makes Christian reason different from ordinary reason, just as men lose these hopes founded upon the recollection of an active life at the moment when they discover that all this activity is fruitless and that henceforth the very recollection of our past escapes from our memories.

Good day, Madame. I promise you that this time you will not have to wait for the next letter.

LETTER VII

Madame,

The more you think over what I told you the other day, the more you will find that all this has been said already many times by people of all parties and opinions, and that we are only attaching a significance to it which had not been given to it before. Yet I have no doubt that if by some chance these letters were to see the light of day, there would be no shortage of complaints that they are paradoxical. If you uphold, with a certain degree of conviction, even the most ancient ideas, you will invariably find that they will be taken for singular innovations. But I believe that the age of paradox and of systems without basis in reality is so far gone that now one would have to be stupid to fall into the old errors of the human mind. It is certain that if today human reason is not as broad, elevated, or fertile as it was in the grand centuries of inspiration and invention, it is infinitely more strict, more sober, more rigorous, more methodical, in a word, more precise than it ever was; and I shall add with a sense of genuine satisfaction, that for some time it has also become more impersonal than ever, a fact which is the best guarantee against the boldness of individual opinions.

If in our meditations upon man's recollections we have had a few insights of our own which are not in agreement with some preconceptions, that is because we thought that it was time for each man to state his position frankly about these matters, just as men did in the past century with reference to the natural sciences. We believed that it was time to conceive of history in all its rational ideality, just as men have conceived of the natural sciences in all their empirical reality. Since the subject of history and the methods of studying it are always the same, it is evident that the circle of historical experience must be closed one day. The applications will never end but, once the rule is found, there will be nothing to add to it. In the physical sciences each new discovery opens up a new area of study and a new field of observation: as a recent example, has not the microscope alone revealed an entire world unknown to the ancient natural scientists? Thus, progress in the natural sciences is necessarily infinite, but in history it is always man whom we study and always the same instrument which we use in this study. So, if there is a great lesson hidden in history, then men must one day necessarily come to a specific conclusion which will mark the end of experience once and for all. I believe that I cited this beautiful thought of Pascal for you once: that the whole succession of men is nothing but one man who always subsists[1]; well, this thought must one day cease to be the imaginative enunciation of an abstract principle and become the real fact behind human reason which will henceforth be, so to say, forced in each of its acts to set in motion the entire immense chain of human ideas extending across the centuries.

But the following question is asked: Could man ever allow the extremely personal, individual consciousness now found within himself to be supplanted by this general consciousness which would make him constantly feel himself to be part of the great moral totality? Yes, without a doubt. Men must realize that besides the feeling of our personal individuality we also cherish a feeling of our relationship to the fatherland, the family, and the community of opinion to which we belong. This latter feeling is often even stronger than the former. Men must also notice that the germ of a superior consciousness resides within us in a very genuine way and forms the essence of our nature, and that the present *ego* is not imposed upon us by an inevitable law but has been created by ourselves. Then men will see that man's whole aim on earth consists in annihilating his personal existence and substituting a completely social or impersonal one for it. You have seen that this is the unique basis for moral philosophy.[2] You now realize that it is also the basis for the idea of history. From this point of view all the illusions which cover or disfigure the different ages in the general life of mankind could be treated not with cold, scientific interest but with the deep sense of moral truth. How can man identify himself with something which has never taken place? How can be become linked with nothingness? Both types of attracting forces occur in the truth alone.

In the study of history we should become used to never compromising with the daydreams of the imagination or with the habits of recollection, but rather let us be as ardent in the search for positive knowledge and certitude as men have always been when in pursuit of the picturesque and the amusing. There is no point in filling our memories with more facts; there are too many facts in man's memory now. It is erroneous to imagine that the mass of factual data necessarily results in certitude. In general, the lack of factual material does not cause historical hypothesizing, nor does factual ignorance cause historical ignorance; it is rather the lack of historical relfection and reasoning. If men should seek to obtain certitude and to reach some positive knowledge in this scientific field simply upon the basis of facts, is it not apparent that there will never be enough of them? Oftentimes a single trait which is properly grasped clarifies and proves better than a whole chronicle. Here then is our rule: let us meditate upon the facts which we know about and try to have living images rather than dead matter in our minds. Let others tire themselves by rummaging around in the old dust of history as much as they want, as for us, we have other things to do. Thus, we consider historical data as perfectly complete but have little confidence in historical logic (we are always cautious about that and always have to scrutinize it carefully). If, like others, we find nothing but human reason and some perfectly free wills within the stream of history, then we will not find what we are looking for in history, even though we may vainly try to cram our minds with facts and arrange them most marvelously in causal relationships. In such a case, we would always simply see the same human game which everyone has seen there in every historical period.[3] And it would always be this dynamic, psychological history, which I told you about earlier, which attempts to make

everything reasonable through the individual, through an imaginary chain of causes and effects, through men's imaginations and the supposedly inevitable consequences of these flights of imagination, and which also hands human intelligence over to its own law. This shows a lack of understanding for the fact that the influence of a supreme law must necessarily be all the more evident there, due to the infinite superiority of this part of our complete nature over the other.[4]

And here is one of the most remarkable examples of the duplicity in certain popular concepts of history as it is presented today: you know that the Greeks make art a comprehensive idea of the human spirit. Look at what constitutes this magnificent creation of Hellenic genius. The material side of man was idealized, heightened, apotheosized; the natural, legitimate order of things was reversed; what should have remained forever in the lower regions of the intellectual world was placed on a level with man's loftiest thoughts. The influence of the senses upon man's spirit was augmented infinitely; the great line of demarcation which separates the divine and the human within man's perception was broken. This resulted in chaotic confusion of all moral components. The intellect pounced upon things which were the least worthy of its attention, as if these were the important things to know; an incredible allure was imparted to the most vicious aspects of human nature; a sensuous and deceitful poetry was introduced into the imagination in place of the intellectual, truthful primitive poetry, and this powerful faculty, created in order for us to represent the unrepresentable and to see the unseeable, was henceforth employed only to render the sensuous even more sensuous, the earthy even more earthy; the result was that our physical being grew while our moral being was shrunk. And, though some wise men, such a Pythagoras and Plato, fought against this fatal tendency of the spirit of their times, they themselves were more or less invaded by this spirit; their efforts accomplished nothing, and it is only after Christianity had regenerated the human spirit that their teachings acquired genuine influence. That is what Greek art did. It is the apotheosis of matter, no one can deny. Well, have people understood it in this way? No, far from it. People look at the remaining monuments of this art, without understanding what they mean; men take delight in viewing these admirable inspirations of a spirit which fortunately no longer exists, but men do not even suspect what happens in the impure heart and the deceitful spirit. It is a cult, a drunkenness, a fascination which rots our sense of morality.

However, when in the state of this imbecilic admiration, man need only exercise his cool reasoning-power upon what he feels, in order to recognize that it comes from the vilest part of our being, because, to coin a phrase, it is with our bodies that we understand these bodies made of marble and bronze. And notice that all the beauty and all the perfection of these figures simply comes from the perfect stupidity which they express; but just let a sign of reason dare to appear in their traits and the ideal which charms us would disappear immediately. Thus, this is not even the representation of a reasonable being which we contemplate but some kind of human animal, a fictitious being, a kind

of monster produced by the most disordered excesses of the human spirit, and its image should not only not give us any pleasure but should really be repulsive to us. This how the gravest questions in the philosophy of history are disfigured and obscured by prejudice, these habits from school, these intellectual routines, and this charm of a deceiving illusion which form the present-day idea of history.

Perhaps you will ask me if I myself have always been a stranger to these seductions of art? No, Madame, on the contrary; some sort of instinct had revealed them to me as sweet enchantments which ought to fill my life, long before I actually knew them. When one of the great events of the century brought me to the capital in which conquest had momentarily assembled so many marvels, I did as the others and acted even more devoutly, I offered my incense upon the altar of the idols.[5] Later when I had seen them for a second time[6] in the light of their native sun, I again took great delight in them. But it is also true that something bitter, similar to remorse, was always hiding at the bottom of this delight; moreover, when I realized the truth, I did not avoid any of its consequences but rather accepted all of them at once without evasion.

But, Madame, let us return to these great historical personalities whom I referred to the other day as misunderstood or misplaced by history. Without that you would have an incomplete idea of this matter. Let us begin with Moses, the most gigantic and imposing of all historical figures.

Thank God, we no longer live at the time when the great Jewish legislator was considered simply to be one of those creatures belonging to the world of fiction - even for those who bothered to study him earnestly; he was like all these supernatural heroes, demigods, and prophets which one finds upon the first pages of the histories of ancient people or a poetic personality studied by history simply from the viewpoint of its instructive value as a type, symbol or expression of the era in which he is placed according to human tradition. Nobody today can doubt, I think, the historical reality of Moses. Nevertheless, there is no doubt that the sacred atmosphere encircling him is not good for him and that it has prevented him from occupying the place which belongs to him in history. This great man's influence upon humanity is not as well understood and appreciated as it shoud be. His features remain too veiled in the mysterious light covering them. Since he has not been studied enough, Moses does not provide the lessons usually resulting from the appearance of great men in history. Neither public figure nor private individual, neither thinker nor man of action discovers all the teaching that could be found in the story of Moses' life. This results from habits ushered into the mind by religion in impressing a superhuman appearance upon the biblical figures and making them appear completely different from what they really are.[7] One cannot meditate enough upon Moses' personality, a curious mixture of eminence and simplicity, forcefulness and kindheartedness, hardness and sweetness. There is, I believe, no single character which offers a combination of such opposite traits and talents. And when I think about this prodigious creature and about the effects

which he had upon men I do not know what I should admire more: the historical phenomenon which he caused or the moral phenomenon which I find in him as a person.

On the one hand, there is this immense conception of a chosen people, i.e., a people armed with the supreme mission of guarding the idea of one God on earth, and this spectacle of the extraordinary means which he utilized to organize this people in such a way that they would preserve this idea, not only intact but so that one day the idea could appear powerful and irresistible, like a natural force outshining all human powers and bringing the whole intellectual world into submission. On the other hand, there is the man whose simplicity was almost a weakness, capable of giving vent to his wrath merely in an ineffectual manner, able to command only by wearing himself out in argumentation; he accepts the advice of the first man who comes along: a strange genius, the strongest and most docile of men at one and the same time! He engenders the times to come and humbly submits to all that is offered to him under the guise of truth; he speaks to men from the midst of a meteor, his voice resounds throughout the centuries, he strikes people like destiny and yet gives in to the first sign of a sensitive heart and to the first just reason which accosts him! Is there not a surprising greatness, a unique lesson in that?

Men have tried to diminish this greatness by stating that at first he had only dreamed of delivering his people from an unbearable yoke, although men honor him for the heroism he displayed in his work. Men have pretended to see him only as a great legislator and today, I believe, they discover an admirable liberalism in his laws. It has also been said that his God was simply a national God and that he had taken over all his theosophy from the Egyptians. He was certainly a patriot but what great soul is not, no matter what his mission on earth may be? Besides, there is a general law: one must work within the domestic circle in which one is placed and have an effect upon one's natural, social family, in order to have an effect upon men; one must address oneself to one's nation, in order to speak distinctly to mankind; otherwise one will not be heard, and nothing will be accomplished. The more direct and practical man's moral action upon his neighbors is, the more definite and strong it is; the more personal the expression, the more powerful it is. Nothing helps us towards a better understanding of *the supreme principle* behind the actions of this man than the perfect efficacy and justice of the means he utilized, in order to achieve the work which he had in mind. It is possible that he had found the idea of a national God among his own or among other people and that he had made use of this given reality, like so many others which he found in his natural predecessors, in order to introduce his sublime monotheism into human thought.

But it does not follow from this that Jehovah was not the God of the whole earth for him as He is for Christians. The more he sought to isolate and reinforce this great dogma in his nation, the more he employed extraordinary means in order to attain this end, and the more throughout all this work by a superior reason one can discern the wholly universal thought of preserving the notion of the unique God for the entire world for all generations to come. In the

construction of an inviolable sanctuary to the true God amid the polytheism pervading the whole earth at the time was there any surer method than by inspiring the people, guardian of the sacred monument, with a racial abhorrence for all idolatrous people and by binding the entire social existence of this people, their whole destiny, memory, and hope to this single principle? Read *Deuteronomy* with this in mind and you will be surprised how much light it throws upon Moses' system, as well as upon the whole philosophy of revelation.

Each word in this unusual book reveals the *superhuman* idea which dominated the spirit of its author. This also explains these frightening exterminations ordained by Moses, which are in such strange contrast with the sweetness of his nature and which disgusted a philosophy even more foolish than impious.[8] This philosophy did not comprehend that the man who was such a prodigious instrument in the hands of Providence and the one entrusted with its secrets could only act as Providence and nature. The time and generations could not have any sort of value for him; his mission was not directed at offering a model of justice and moral perfection but at giving the human spirit an immense idea which the human spirit could not have produced by itself. Do you believe that he was only dreaming of colonizing the stupid and unmanageable rabble which he was leading, when he repressed the cry of his affectionate heart, as he commanded the massacre of nations and as he lowered the sword of divine justice upon whole groups of people? What a brilliant psychology! What will it not do to avoid the real cause of the phenomenon under consideration? It relieves itself of any trouble by combining the most contradictory traits within the same soul, though no one has ever experienced such a combination in any single individual!

And does it matter, after all, if Moses borrowed some teachings from Egyptian wisdom? Does it matter if he had at first simply thought of freeing his nation from the yoke of servitude? If he embodied in his people the thought which he picked up somewhere or drew from the depths of his soul, surrounded it with all the elements of preservation and continuity in human nature, and in this way gave the true God to man, so that the entire intellectual development resulting from this principle is due incontestably to him, would it be any less true because of that?

David is one of the historical personages whose characteristics have been passed on to us very well. There is nothing as lively, dramatic, and true as his history, nothing as marked as his features. The account of his life, his sublime songs in which the present disappears so admirably into the future, portray the interior of his soul so well that there is absolutely nothing in his existence which is hidden from us. Nevertheless, he makes an impression like the Greek or Roman heroes upon profoundly religious spirits. Once again, the trouble is that all these great men in the Bible belong to another world; the halo glowing over their heads unfortunately relegates them to a region where the mind does not like to travel, a region of importunate forces commanding inflexible submission,

where men exist perpetually in the presence of implacable law, and where the only thing to do is kneel down and adore. However, how can one understand historical movement if one does not study it there where the principle creating the movement manifests itself best?

In contrasting Socrates and Marcus Aurelius with these two giants in Scripture, I wanted to make you judge the two worlds from which they are drawn, through this contrast of such different forms of greatness. Read the anecdotes about Socrates in Xenophon first without the presumptions attached to his name, if you can; think over how much his death added to his renown; think about his famous demon and this complacency with vice which he pushed to an unusual degree, you must admit[9]; mull over the different accusations with which his contemporaries charged him; think over the words which he pronounced just before his death and which bequeathed all the incertitude of his thought to posterity; finally think about all the divergent, absurd, contradictory opinions which issued from his school: As for Marcus Aurelius, let us get rid of the superstition about him too; meditate properly on his book; remember the massacre at Lyons, the appalling fellow to whom he delivered the universe, the times in which he lived, the high society in which he was placed, and finally all the means of greatness offered by his position in the world. Then please compare the result of Socratic philosophy with that of Mosaic religion, the personage of the Roman emperor with that of the man who, though a herdsman, became king, poet, sage and thus personified the vast, mysterious conception of the prophetic legislator and was made the focal point in this marvelous world in which the goals of humanity were destined for fulfillment. He is the one who definitively determined his people's inclination which was specifically and profoundly religious, and in this way he created the earthly order of things which was alone capable of rendering the generation of truth possible here below. Undoubtedly you agree then that if poetical thought represents men such as Moses and David like superhuman beings and surrounds them with an extraordinary brilliance, universal reason should also be objectively prone to see within them something more than simply the great, extraordinary life of the universe; these men were certainly completely direct manifestations of the supreme law governing the universe, and their appearance can be compared to these great epochs in the physical order which change or regenerate nature from time to time.[10]

Epicurus comes next. You believe that I do not attach any particular importance to the reputation of this personage. But first of all, you have to realize that his materialism did not differ in any way from the ideas of the other ancient philosophers; however, since Epicurus had a more frank and more coherent critical sense than most of them he did not become entangled in endless contradictions as they did. Pagan deism appeared to him what it really was, namely, an absurdity, its spiritualization a deception. His physics which was nothing more than that of Democritus, whom Bacon called somewhere the only reasonable physicist among the ancients, was not inferior to that of the other

natural scientists in his day and, as for his atomic theory, if you discard the metaphysics from it, it is not as ridiculous as men have said, since the molecular theory has become such a positive thing in our day. But, as you know, his name is principally linked up with his ethics, and that is the reason for his bad reputation. But we judge this morality only on the basis of this sect's licentiousness and upon more or less arbitrary interpretations made by men after his death; his own writings, as you know, have not come down to us. It is undoubtedly all right for Cicero to fear voluptuousness at the very mention of his name; however, just look at this discredited morality, study it correctly and principally with reference to what we know about the author's own personal life, and disregard what results it had in the pagan world, since the result belongs much more to the general attitude of the human spirit in these times than to the teachings of Epicurus. Then compare this teaching with the other moral systems of antiquity and you will find it not as arrogant, hard and impractical as that of the Stoics nor as vague, nebulous, and powerless as that of the Platonists. This moral doctrine was kindly, benevolent, and human, so that in a way it contained something of the principle in Christian morality.

There is no way of misunderstanding the fact that this philosophy contained an essential element which was totally lacking in the practical thought of antiquity, an element of unity, solidarity, and good will among men. This philosophy had common sense and an absence of pride in a special way which is not to be found in contemporary philosophies. Besides, this philosophy had the sovereign good consist in peace of soul and sweet joy imitating the heavenly goodness of the gods upon earth. Epicurus himself provided a good example of this peaceable existence; he lived almost obscurely in the bosom of sweet friendship and study. If his morality could have been inculcated into the spirit of people without allowing itself to become perverted by the vicious principle dominating the world then, I am sure that his morality would have filled men's hearts with a sweetness and a humanity which the boastful morality of the Stoics and the dreamy speculation of the Academicians would have been incapable of inculcating. Please note then that Epicurus is the only wise man in antiquity who led a perfectly irreproachable moral life and the only one whose disciples remembered him with feelings of love and veneration which were like a cult.[11] Now you understand why we have had to rectify our ideas about this a little.

We shall not go back to Aristotle. He does form one of the most important chapters in modern history, but this is too large a subject to be simply treated in a superficial manner. Only please notice that Aristotle is in a certain sense a creation of the new spirit. It is natural that in its youth modern reason, tormented by its enormous need to know, became wholly attached to this intellectual mechanic who made understanding move forward with a prodigious velocity through the use of his cranks, levers, and pulleys. And it was also very understandable that the Arabs, who unearthed him first, should have found him so much to their tastes. This impoverished people had nothing of its own which evoked any king of attachment; so naturally a wholly completed wisdom

appealed to them. At last all that has passed away: Arabs, Scholastics, and their common master, they have all fulfilled their different missions. All that has restored more consistency, more aplomb to the mind; its activity has become more assured and that has produced a method of procedure which facilitates the movements and accelerates the operations of the mind. Everything has turned out for the best, as you notice; evil has turned into good thanks to the power and hidden enlightenment in modern reason. Today we have to retrace our steps and retravel the wide roads of days gone by when our intellect had no machines at its disposal other than golden-blue wings of its angelic nature.

Let us turn to Mohammed. Think about the good which his religion did for humanity: first, because it contributed to the destruction of polytheism along with other more powerful causes, also because it disseminated the idea of one God and one universal faith in an immense territory of the globe and even into regions which could be termed inaccessible to the general intellectual movement. Thus, Mohammed's religion prepared innumerable groups of people for the definitive destiny of mankind. Men could not fail to recognize that, despite the debt which this great man owed to his time and his birthplace, he merits respect infinitely more than this mob of useless wise men who were incapable of ever giving body and life to any of their ideas, or of filling a simple heart with a strong conviction, and who have had only a divisive influence upon human nature, instead of trying to unify the scattered elements in man's nature. Islamism is one of the most remarkable manifestations of a general law: any other kind of judgment reveals a misunderstanding of Christianity's universal influence, the source of Islam. The most essential quality of our religion is its power to assume the most diversified forms of religious thought and to know how to become linked, when necessary, even with error, in order to achieve its total result. Mohammed's religion should be considered one of the branches in the great historical development of the revealed religion. The most intolerant dogmatists should have no difficulty admitting this important fact and they would certainly do so, should they once become aware of what makes us regard the Mohammedans as our natural enemies, for our prejudice arises solely from that thing.[12] Besides, you know that practically every chapter in the Koran makes reference to Jesus Christ. But we agree that men have no clear idea about the great work of redemption and no understanding of the mystery of Christ's reign, so long as they do not see the influence of Christianity in every place where just the name of the Saviour is pronounced and as long as men do not perceive that it exercises an influence upon every spirit who somehow comes in contact with His teaching. Otherwise we would have to exclude entire multitudes who call themselves Christians from the benefits of redemption. But would this not result in reducing the kingdom of Jesus Christ to a very minor thing and the universality of Christianity to a ridiculous fiction?

Thus, since Mohammedanism is a result of the religious fermentation introduced in the East by the appearance of the new religion, it occupies one of the first places in the list of things which do not at first seem to originate from

Christianity but which certainly do come from it. As a result, besides the negative effect which Mohammedanism had upon the formation of Christian society by fusing the particular interests of people into that of the common good, besides the numerous materials that Arabic civilization furnished our own - things which must be considered as the indirect ways utilized by Providence, in order to consumate the regeneration of humanity - in Islam's own influence upon the spirit of people submitted to it we have to recognize a direct and positive effect of the doctrine from which it is derived and which has simply adjusted itself there to certain demands of time and place, in order to achieve the means of spreading the seed of truth upon an even vaster territory. There is no doubt that those who serve the Lord with knowledge and conviction are fortunate! But let us not forget that in the world there is an infinite number of forces obeying the voice of Christ without having any notion of the supreme power which sets them in motion!

Homer is our last subject for discussion. The question of Homer's influence upon the human spirit has been completely settled in our time. Today we know what Homeric poetry really is and how it contributed to the formation of the Greek character which, in turn, determined that of the entire ancient world. We know that this poetry replaced another loftier, purer poetry of which only fragments remain. We also know that Homeric poetry substituted a new order of ideas in place of the old order of ideas which did not originate on Grecian soil and that these primitive ideas, pushed into the background by the new thought, found refuge either in the mysteries of Samothrace or else in the shade of other sanctuaries dedicated to lost truths, and that from that time onwards only a small number of elect or initiates knew of their existence.[13] Men do not realize, I find, how Homeric elements still to be found within the consciousness of mankind can have something in common with the times in which we live. Now that is precisely what interests the real philosophy of history, since its principal study, as you have seen, consists simply in the search for the permanent results and eternal effect of historical phenomena.

Thus, in our opinion, Homer is still simply the Typhon[14] or the Ahriman[15] of the present world, as he was in this world which he created. As we see it, deadly heroism based on passion, impetuous ideal of beauty, and unbridled taste for the earth all come to us from him.[16] Note that there was nothing like that in the other civilized societies of the world. The Greeks were the only ones who dared to idealize and divinize vice and crime; they and the people who inherited their civilization were the only ones to develop harmful poetry. In the Middle Ages one can see clearly in what direction the mind of the Christian nations would have developed, if it had completely surrendered to the hand guiding it. This poetry could not possibly have come to us from our northern ancestors; the spirit of northern men was formed in a wholly different manner and aimed at anything but attachment to the earth; if the spirit of northern men had combined all alone with Christianity, instead of what happened, it would have certainly become lost in the nebulous vagueness of their dreamy fancies. Moreover, we

no longer have any of the blood which flowed in their veins, and it is not among the people described by Caesar and Tacitus that we look for lessons on life but rather among those people in Homer's world.

Only a short time ago a reversion to our own past started to lead us back to the bosom of our family and made us rediscover our paternal heritage little by little. Like northern people, we have inherited only customs and traditions; the spirit is sustained only by knowledge; the most inveterate customs become lost and the most enrooted traditions obliterated, when they are not linked with knowledge. Now, aside from our religious ideas, all our ideas come from the Greeks and Romans.

So, as for Homeric poetry, after it had led astray the old Western stream of thought which linked men with the great days of creation, it did the same thing in the new Western world. In coming to us with the science, philosophy, and literature of the ancients, Homeric poetry identified us with all that so well that we are still suspended between the false world and the true one in the present state of our existence. Even though men may not concern themselves with Homer today, and though they certainly do not read his works, nonetheless, his gods and heroes still strongly dispute with the Christian idea for every inch of ground. For there is really an astounding seduction in this wholly earthy and material poetry, so prodigiously sweet to our natural vices, since this poetry weakens the fiber of our reason, holds reason stupidly enchained by its phantoms and its delusions, and rocks reason to sleep with powerful illusions. But, the old, evil impressions will continue to form the most vital, the most active element in our reason, so long as a deep moral sense, derived from a clear view of antiquity and from a complete absorption of the spirit in Christian truth, has not filled our hearts with scorn and disgust for these ages of deception and folly, genuine saturnalia in the life of humanity, which still infatuate us, and so long as some kind of conscious repentance has not made us blush at the mad worship which we have lavished upon these detestable grandeurs for too long a time. As for me, I believe that in order to regenerate ourselves completely in accordance with revealed reason, we still need *some immense penance, some dreadful expiation* decidedly felt by the universal Christian community and generally suffered like a great physical catastrophe on the whole surface of our world; without it I cannot conceive how we could rid ourselves of the mire which still stains our recollections.[17] That is the way that the philosophy of history should understand Homerism. Therefore, decide for yourself how the philosophy of history should consider Homer. See, if after all that, it is not bound in conscience to affix the seal of an indelible brand upon Homer's forehead.

Here we are, Madame at the end of our gallery. I have not told you everything that I wanted to; however, I have to end. But do you know one thing? Basically we Russians have nothing in common with Homer, the Greeks, the Romans, the Germans, and all that. All that is completely foreign to us. But what do you want to do about it? We have to speak the language of

Europe. Our exotic civilization has its back turned towards Europe in such a way that, although we do not have its ideas, we have no other language than Europe's own; so, we are thus forced to speak that language. Even if the small number of intellectual habits, traditions, and historical memories which we possess do not bind us to any people upon earth, even if we do not really belong to any of the systems in the moral universe, nonetheless through our social superficialities we tend towards the Western world. Without uniting us as intimately to Europe as people imagine and without letting us experience the great movement at work there with our whole being, yet this link, however weak, still makes our future destiny dependent upon that of European society. Therefore, the more we try to identify ourselves with European society, the better off we shall be. Up to now we have lived all alone; what we have learned from others was upon the surface of our being, like a simple decoration, without permeating into the interior of our souls; *today the forces of the sovereign society have grown so much, its work upon the rest of humanity has increased so greatly, that soon we shall be swept along body and soul in the universal whirlwind, that is certain: we surely could not remain in our desert any longer. So let us do all that we can to prepare the way for our descendants.* Since we are not able to leave them what we have not had, such as beliefs, a reasoning-process formed by history, a strongly delineated personality, animated, active, fruitful convictions developed in the course of a long intellectual life, then at least let us leave them a few ideas which, although we ourselves have not found them transmitted from one generation to another, will nonetheless have a certain traditional element and for that reason finally some power and fertility greater than our own thoughts. In this way we shall have merited much for posterity and shall not have lived uselessly upon earth.

Good day, Madame, it will now be solely up to you to make me take up this matter again whenever you want. After all, what is the use of elaborating and exhausting each idea in an intimate conversation full of understanding on both sides? If what I have said to you is enough to cause you to discover some new lesson in the study of history, some interest which is deeper than what is ordinarily found in it, then I am satisfied.

Moscow February 16, 1829

LETTER VIII

Yes, Madame, the time has come to speak the language of simple reason. There is no point any more in having blind faith, beliefs from the heart; we must appeal directly to thought. Sentiment can no longer be discerned through this mass of artificial needs, violent interests, and agonizing preoccupations which invade our lives. In France and in England existence has become too complicated, too prone to particular interests, too individual; in Germany it is too abstract, too peculiar for even the powers of the heart to produce their legitimate effect there. For the moment the rest of the world does not count. Today we must try if possible to reduce everything to a single problem of probabilities, with a solution within the capacities of all intellectuals, which would fit every temperament, not harm anybody's present interests, and thus be able to attract even the most rebellious minds.

This does not mean that feelings are to be forever banished from the intellectual world. God save us, their turn will come again. Then they will reappear stronger, larger, purer than ever. I am certain that this moment is coming soon. But, in our day, in the present situation, feelings are not able to move souls. It is very important to realize this fully. Though some awakening of the lively qualities of mankind's youth is noticeable at this moment, yet this is only the dawn of a beautiful day; the country is still completely covered with the shadows of twilight; only certain peaks begin to catch fire in the first rays of daybreak.

The material proofs of the truth are complete for those who are concerned about it. Do you know, Madame, what I mean by the material proofs of truth? I mean the mass of historical facts which have been properly analyzed. At this time they must be brought together in a systematic and popular form, and they must be expressed in such a way that they may make an impression upon those minds most indifferent to good, those who are the least open to truth, or those who still flounder around in past times, in those times which are all over for everyone else and will, of course, never return, but which still exist for slow hearts and for languid souls who never understand the present day but continue to exist in yesterdays.

This conclusive demonstration has to be drawn from the general idea of history. And this idea should henceforth be simply the idea of a lofty psychology, namely, that the human being should be understood once and for all as an intelligent being in abstraction, but never as the individual and personal being, circumscribed by the present moment, an ephermeral insect, which is born and dies on the same day, and which is linked with the totality of things merely by the law of birth and corruption. Thus, we must show what really makes humanity continue to exist: we must reveal to everyone the mysterious reality, hiding in the depths of intellectual nature and which is still visible only to the eye enlightened by some special illumination. Only let us not be too exclusive, too fanciful, or too symmetrical; but most important, let us speak to

our century simply in the language of the century and not in the antiquated language of dogma, which has become unintelligible; then success will undoubtedly be achieved in this today, since reason, science, and even art seem to precipitate passionately towards a new ethical cataclysm, as in the Saviour's great epoch.

I have often spoken to you about the influence which Christian truth exercised upon society. I have not told you everything. Though it is hard to believe this, nonetheless what I am going to say is a completely new matter. Men appreciate the moral influence of Christianity well enough, but they have still scarcely thought about its properly intellectual activity, about the powerful force of its logic. Nothing has been said yet about that role which Christianity played in the development and in the formation of modern thought. Men still do not know that our whole argumentation is Christian; we all still believe that we think in the categories and syllogisms of Aristotle. This is because the long complaints of the philosophers and the schismatics about those centuries[1], in which there was supposedly only superstition, ignorance, and fanaticism, have forced us to lose sight completely of the beneficial effects of the Christian religion. So, when the fever of skepticism was over, the most righteous and humble minds found themselves alienated upon their own terrain, and only with great effort did they establish anew everything in its place in their idea. Moreover, it is true that these intellectuals[2] are not sufficiently interested in the study of purely human reality. They neglect it too much. Habitually contemplating superhuman activity, they do not see the natural forces working in the world, so they almost completely disregard the material conditions of intellectual activity. But it is time for modern reason to acknowledge that all its power is due to Christianity. It is time for it to learn that it is only through the extraordinary means furnished by revelation and through the living clarity which Christianity was able to spread to all objects of human reflection that the majestic structure of the new science was built. This proud science should, at last, acknowledge by itself that it was elevated so high only thanks to the strict rule, the fixed principle, and, most of all, thanks to the instinct and this passion for truth which science found in the teachings of Christ.

Fortunately we do not live in the times in which partisan obstinacy was taken for conviction and sectarian hatred for fervor.[3] For this reason one can hope that agreement may be reached. But, of course, you will agree that it is not up to the truth to make concessions. And this is not a question of etiquette: for the lawful authority[4] concession would mean renunciation of all power and all influence; it would mean self-destruction. This is not a question of delusion or of any kind of external impression. Every delusion has been dispelled forever, every illusion has been ended forever. We are concerned with a very real thing, more real than it is possible to express in words. It is past existence which warrants future existence; such is the law of life. If you renounce your past you deprive yourself of the future. However, for example, the three hundred years' time which the great Christian error[5] reckons as its own is not simply a memory

which can be erased away by wishing for it. For this reason the schismatics can build whatever future they want. From the beginning the old community lived only by hope and by faith in the destinies promised it, whereas the schismatics have lived on to this day without any idea of the future.

But, first of all, there is an essential matter which required clarification above all. Among the things which promote the preservation of truth on earth, one of the most effective is certainly the sacred book of the New Testament. Men naturally treat the book containing the authentic document for the establishment of the new order on earth with mechanical veneration. The written word does not disappear like the spoken word. The written word coerces the mind. It strictly subordinates the mind to itself by its stability and its long sanction. But at the same time, in codifying reason, the written word deprives it of mobility and confines it by forcing it into the narrow framework of the Scripture, enchaining it in every way. Nothing hinders religious thought in its lofty impulse, in its infinite progress, as much as the book; nothing makes the continual conclusive strengthening of religious thought in the human soul so difficult. Today everything is based upon the letter in the religious sphere, and even the voice of the incarnate reason remains silent. The pulpits of truth resound only with words devoid of will and devoid of authority. The sermon is no longer anything but an incidental affair in the work of salvation. But, finally, you must admit, the discourse transmitted to us in Scripture was, of course, directed simply at those who were there listening. As a result Scripture could not be equally intelligible to men of all times and all places. It has to be marked by a certain local color from the times in which it was written, but this shuts Scripture up in a sphere, from which it can only be released by means of a more or less arbitrary and completely human interpretation. Then how can this old word always address the world with the same power which it had at the time when it was the genuine speech of its own time, the real power of the moment? Does the world not need a new voice in contact with the course of history, a voice whose sounds would not be foreign to any ear and would vibrate equally upon all points on earth, so that the echoes of the present century would seize upon it with the desire to spread it from one end of the world to the other?

The verb, the word addressed to all centuries, is not only just the discourse of the Saviour, it is His whole heavenly image, crowned with His halo, covered with His blood, suspended on the cross, the way God once placed Him within human memory. When the son of God said that He would send men the spirit and that He Himself would be in the midst of them for eternity, do you really believe that He was thinking about this book made after His death, in which, for better or worse, His life and His speeches were related and some of the speeches by His disciples were collected? Do you believe that He thought that this book would perpetuate His teaching on earth? Certainly this was not His thought. However, he meant that after Him there would be men, who would become so absorbed in the contemplation and in the study of His perfections and would be so filled with His teaching and the example of His life, that morally they would form one whole with Him and that these men, following each other through all

future ages, would transmit His whole thought, His whole being from generation to generation; here is what He wanted to say and here is what is not understood. It is believed that His whole heritage is found written in these pages, which have been deformed so often by so many diverse interpretations and twisted so often by flights of fancy.

As is known, Christianity was consolidated without the co-operation of any kind of book. In the second century Christianity had already conquered the world. And from that time onward the human race was subjected irrevocably to it. People imagine that they only have to disseminate this book throughout the earth in order to convert the world! A wretched idea on which the apostates passionately subsist!

It is in men made such as we, made as He was, that divine reason lives on, not in the volume fabricated by the Church. And that is precisely why the obstinate attachment on the part of traditional people to the astounding dogma of the real presence of the body in the Eucharist and this hyperbolic worship of the body of the Saviour are so admirable. Nothing helps us understand the source of Christian truth better than that: nothing helps us see more clearly the necessity of striving to realize the material presence of the God-man among us in every possible way, by evoking his corporeal image constantly, in order to have this formidable image continually before our eyes as the eternal model and lesson for the new humanity. In my opinion, this fact is worthy of contemplation. This strange dogma of the Eucharist, object of derision and scorn, open to the evil attacks of human argument on so many sides, is still nonetheless preserved indestructibly and purely in the minds of some. Why? Could it not be in order to serve one day as an element of union among the different Christian systems? Could it not be so that one day in the world there would flash some new light, which at present is still hidden with its miraculous destiny? I am certian of it.

Therefore, although the sign traced by human thought should be considered as a necessary element of the moral world, it is nonetheless true that the real basis for the contact of intelligences and for the universal development of rational being is to be found elsewhere: namely, in the living word, in this word which altered according to the times, lands, and the persons involved but is always remaining what it should be, needing neither commentaries nor exegeses, its authenticity requiring no recourse to any canon, and finally it is to be found in the natural instrument of our thought. So, whereas I would not call it heterodox to assume that all wisdom is contained in the pages of one book, as the schismatics hold, yet it certainly has very little in common with philosophy. And moreover, it is certain that there is a lofty philosophy in these persevering beliefs which compels the people of the law to recognize another purer source of truth, another less earthly authority.

Men must learn to esteem this Christian reason so secure, so exact in these people.[6] It is the instinct for truth, it is the consequence of the moral principle, borne from activity back into the mind; this is the unconscious logic of a perfectly disciplined reasoning. An extraordinary understanding of life, brought

into the world by the founder of Christianity, a spirit of abnegation, an averison to separation, a passionate love for unity: here is what guides the pure Christians in everything. In this way the idea revealed from above is preserved, in this way the grand operation of the fusion of souls and of the world's different moral forces into one soul, into a single force is completed through this idea. This fusion is the whole mission of Christianity. The truth is one: the kingdom of God, heaven on earth, all the promises in the Bible - all this is nothing but the prophecy and the work of the unification of all human thought in a unique thought; and this unique thought is the thought of God Himself, to put it another way, *the accomplished moral law*. All the work of the ages in man's intellectual life is meant to produce this definite result which is the end and goal of all things, the last phase of human nature, the dénouement of the universal drama, the great apocalyptic synthesis.

APOLOGIA OF A MADMAN

Adveniat regnum tuum

"Charity", say St. Paul, "suffers everything, believes everything, endures everything."[1] So, let us suffer, believe, and endure everything; let us be charitable. But, first of all, the catastrophe which has just crushed my philosophical existence and thrown the work of an entire life to the winds is simply the necessary result of the outcry which arose upon the appearance of my article[2], of this page which could be considered acrimonious but which certainly merited something besides the outcry which greeted it. After all, the government has only done its duty: it can even be said that the measures which it took in my case were completely liberal, since they did not exceed the expectation of the public. What could the most well-meaning goverment do other than conform to the general tone?

As for the public outcry, this is something completely different. There are different ways of loving one's country. For example, the Samoyed who loved the native snows which have rendered him nearsighted, the smoky hut in which he remains cowering for half of his life, the rancid grease of his reindeer which surrounds him with a nauseous atmosphere, assuredly does not love his country in the same way as the Englishman, proud of his institutions and of the high civilization in his fortunate island, and it would undoubtedly be quite unfortunate if we were still at the state of cherishing the localities which saw us born in the way that the Samoyeds do.

Love of the fatherland is certainly a very beautiful thing, but there is one thing better than that; it is the love of truth. Love of fatherland makes heroes, love of truth makes wise men, the benefactors of humanity; it is love of fatherland which divides peoples, which feeds national hatreds, which sometimes covers the earth with mourning; it is love of truth which spreads light, which creates the joys of the spirit, which brings men close to the Divinity. It is not by way of the fatherland, it is by way of the truth that one mounts to heaven. It is true that, as for us Russians, we have few men in love with truth; we lack examples, so one must not expect too much from a nation which has always been so little concerned with what is true and what is not, if it was so affected by a slightly virulent address directed at its infirmities. Moreover, I have no rancor, I assure you, against this dear public which cajoled me for such a long time: it is with composure, without any irritation, that I am trying to explain to myself my strange situation! Must I not try to explain to myself where one upon whom insanity has been imposed stands *vis-à-vis* his confreres, *vis-à-vis* his fellow citizens, *vis-à-vis* his God?

I have never put much stock in the populace; I have never had democratic tastes; I have never courted popular ovations nor esteemed the judgments of the crowd. I have always thought that humanity could advance only by following

its elite, by following those who have the mission of leading it; that universal opinion is not absolute reason as a great writer of our times[3] believed, that the instincts of majorities are necessarily more egotistical, more emotional, more narrow than those of the solitary man; that what men call the common sense of the people is not good sense at all; that truth cannot be represented by a number; finally that human intelligence always manifests itself most powerfully only in the solitary mind, center and sun of its sphere. Then how does it happen that one day I found myself faced by an enraged public whose approvals I never earnestly sought, whose favors never pleased me, whose sallies never affected me? How is it that a thought which was not addressed to the world, which, I declared a thousand times, had nothing to do with my contemporaries, which I bequeathed in the depths of my convictions to future generations better informed than we. How is it that with the quality of semipublicity which it had already acquired, this thought had one day broken its fetters, had escaped from its cloister, had precipitated into the street bounding into the midst of the stupefied crowd? Certainly I cannot say why, but here is what I can affirm with a perfect assurance.

For the past three hundred years[4] Russia has been aspiring to identify herself with the West, she has been admitting her inferiority to the West, drawing all her ideas, all her teachings, all her joys from the West. For more than a century Russia has done better than that. The greatest of our kings[5], our glory, our demigod, he who began a new era for us, he to whom we owe our greatness and all the goods which we possess, renounced old Russia a hundred years ago in front of the entire world. With his powerful breath he swept away all our old institutions: he dug out an abyss between our past and our present, and he threw all our traditions into it; he went to make himself the smallest in the West, and he returned the greatest among us; he prostrated himself before the West, and he rose as our master and our legislator; he introduced Western idioms into our idiom; he molded the letters of our alphabet upon those of the West; he disdained the clothes of our fathers and made us adopt Western dress; he gave his new capital a Western name; he threw away his hereditary title and adopted a Western title; lastly, he renounced his own name and wrote his signature with a Western name. Since that time, our eyes constantly turned towards the West, and we did nothing but inhale the emanations which came to us from there and nourished ourselves on them. As for our princes, who were always in advance of the nation, who always dragged us along the road of perfection in spite of ourselves, who always towed the country behind them, without the country doing anything at all, they themselves imposed Western customs, language, and luxury upon us. We learned how to read from Western books, we learned how to speak from Westerners; as for our own history, it is the West which taught it to us; we drew everything from the West, we translated the whole West and were finally happy in resembling the West and proud when the West counted us among its own.

This creation of Peter the Great was beautiful, you must agree, this thought of the man of genius who dictated the route which we were henceforth obliged to follow: profound was this word which said to us: Do you see this civilization over there, fruition of so much work, these sciences, these arts, which cost so much sweat for so many generations? All that is yours on condition that you throw off your superstitions, that you repudiate your prejudices, that you will no longer be proud of your barbarous past, that you will ardently desire only to adopt the works of all nations, the riches acquired by the human spirit in all parts of the globe.

And it is not just for his nation alone that the great man worked. Providential men are always sent for the entire universe: a nation demands them first, then they are absorbed into humanity, like these great rivers which first fertilize vast countries, and then go on to flow into the ocean. When forsaking royal majesty and his land, he went to conceal himself in the lowest ranks of civilized people; was it not a unique spectacle, which he offered the universe, of a new effort of man's genius to emerge from narrow sphere of the fatherland, in order to become established in the great sphere of humanity? Such was the lesson which we ought to have gleaned from it! We really did profit from it, and up to this day we have marched along the road which the great emperor mapped out for us. Our immense development is nothing but the fruition of this vast thought. Never has there been a people less infatuated with itself as the Russian people fashioned by Peter the Great. The lofty intelligence of this extraordinary man envisioned completely what ought to be our starting point. He saw that, since we lacked historical data completely, we could not found our future upon this wholly empty basis; he understood that confronted by the old European civilization, all we had to do is choke ourselves in our history, drag ourselves along like the Western people across the world of national prejudices, by the narrow lanes of municipal ideas, in order, by means of a spontaneous flight, to deprive ourselves necessarily of the destinies reserved for us. So, he liberated us from all these precedents which encumber historical societies and impede their development; he opened our intelligence to all great and beautiful ideas existing among men; he handed us over totally to the West, such as the centuries have made it, and he gave us all its history for a history, all its future for a future.

Do you believe that if he had found a rich and fertile history, living traditions, enrooted institutions amid his nation, he would not have hesitated to cast the nation into a new world, to divest it of its nationality? On the contrary, would he not have sought the means of regenerating the nation in this nationality itself? And as for the nation, would it have put up with the fact that its past was ravaged, that Europe's was, as it were, imposed upon it?

But such was not the case. In his land Peter the Great found only a blank sheet of paper, and he wrote on it: Europe and West; since then we belonged to Europe and to the West. One must not be mistaken about it: whatever the genius of this man was, his work was possible only within a nation whose precedents were not imperiously governing the development which it had to pursue, whose traditions did not have the faculty of creating a future for it,

whose memories could be erased with impunity by an audacious legislator. If were were so docile to the voice of the prince who dragged us into a new life, the reason is that we had nothing in our past existence which could legitimize resistance. The most profound trait of our social physiognomy is spontaneity. Each fact in our history is an isolated fact, an imposed fact; each new idea, a detached idea, an imported idea. Therefore, we naturally lack the link between the event of the day and that of yesterday. But there is nothing in this point of view which could justly offend national sentiment. If it is true, it must be accepted, that is all. Since human logic has been denied us, providential logic watched over us and directed us toward its goals. There are great nations, just as there are great historic personages which cannot be explained by the laws of our reason, but which supreme reason decrees in its mystery: so it is with us. Once again, the national honor has nothing to do with it.

The history of a people is not only a sequence of facts which follow upon one another, but also a series of ideas which are linked together. The fact must be translated by an idea; then you have a history; then the fact is not lost; it has ploughed furrows in the intelligent being, it has remained engraved in men's hearts. This history is not made by the historian, it is the development of things. The historian comes along one day, finds everything completed and relates it: but whether he comes or not, history exists there nonetheless; everyone carried it within the depth of his being. That is precisely the history which we do not have. We must learn to get along without it and not to stone the men who have been the first to become aware of that.

From time to time in their diverse excavations our fanatic Slavicists[6] will, of course, still be able to exhume curios for our museums, for our libraries; but one may doubt if out of the depths of our historical soil they can ever draw something to fill up the emptiness in our souls, something to condense the vacuity in our minds. Look at Europe in the Middle Ages; there is no event which is not there, as it were, because of an absolute necessity. Moreover, how many furrows has this history dug in men's intellects as it worked over the terrain upon which man's spirit is moving! I know, of course, that all histories do not possess the rigorous and logical development like that of this prodigious epoch, but it is nonetheless true that there is the genuine character of an historical development, whether it be for one people or for a group of people and that the nations deprived of a past formed in this way should seek the basis for their subsequent progress somewhere other than in their memory. It is the same for the life of peoples as for that of individuals; all men have lived, but only the man of genius has a history.

For example, when a people by means of a concourse of circumstances not fashioned by it and by the effect of a geographical position not chosen by it, expands over an immense amount of land without realizing what it is doing and when one day it discovers itself to be a powerful people, this is assuredly a surprising phenomenon and it could be admired in silence, but what can history say about it? The history of this people will begin only from the day on which it

will be seized by an idea entrusted to it, one which it is called upon to realize, and the day on which it will begin to pursue the idea with this persevering, though obscure, instinct which leads people to their destinies. That is the moment which I evoke for my country with all the powers of my heart; that is the task which I would like to see us undertake; it is up to you, my dear friends and fellow-citizens, who live in a century of lofty teaching and who have just taught me how inspired you are with the holy love of the fatherland.

Since time immemorial the world has been divided into two spheres, into East and West. That is not simply a geographical division, it is an order of things resulting from the very nature of intelligent being. There are two principles which respond to the two dynamic forces of nature, these are two ideas which embrace the whole economy of mankind. It is through self-concentration, meditation, and withdrawal that the human spirit discovered its powers in the East; it is through expanson to the outside, spreading out in every direction through the fight with all the obstacles, that the human spirit developed in the West. In the East, thought withdrawn within itself, sheltered in its repose, hidden in the desert, left social power as master of all earthly goods; in the West the idea of diffusing itself everywhere, embracing all man's needs, aspiring to all kinds of happiness, based power upon the principle of law. Nonetheless in both of these spheres life was strong and productive; in both, human intelligence did not lack any lofty inspirations, profound thoughts, sublime creations. The East came first and poured waves of light from the depths of its silent meditation; then came the West, and its immense activity, its living word; it became imbued with its works, achieved what the East had begun, and finally enveloped the East in its vast embrace. But in the East, the docile intelligent men, having knelt before the authority of the ages, dissipated themselves in the initial ages of the world by the exercise of their absolute submission and stood one day immobile and dumb without suspecting the new destinies which were being prepared for them; whereas in the West intelligent men marched proud and free, bowing only before the authority of reason and of heaven, halting only before the unknown, with their eyes always fixed upon the boundless future. And there intelligent men still advance, as you know, and you also know that since Peter the Great we believed that we advanced with them.

But here comes a new school[7] into our midst. They do not want anything from the West anymore, they want to demolish the work of Peter the Great; they want to follow the road into the desert once again. Unmindful of what the West has done for us, they insult it; ungrateful towards the great man who regenerated us, towards Europe which taught us, they deny both the great man and Europe and already in its premature ardor this newly-born patriotism proclaims us Eastern. What need have we, they say, to seek enlightenment in the countries of Europe? We ought to have left it up to the passage of time: left to ourselves, we should have undoubtedly surpassed all these people bound to error and to deceit. Then what do we have to envy the West for? The religious wars, the Inquisition, the Pope, the Jesuits? What truly beautiful things! It is not the

West, it is the East which is the fatherland of sciences and of vast thoughts. Let us withdraw then into this East which touches us everywhere and from which we lately received our beliefs, our laws, our virtues, all that has rendered us the most powerful people upon the earth. The old East is fading away: well then, we are its natural heirs; it is in our midst that the great and mysterious truths, preserved by the East so long for the good of humanity, are going to be perpetuated.

Now you realize the origins of the hurricane which struck me the other day, and you see that a real reaction is taking place in our land. But this time the impetus does not come from on high. On the contrary, in the upper levels of society never was the memory of our great legislator more venerated than today. Therefore, the initiative belongs wholly to the country. Where this first act of the emancipated reason of the nation will lead us, God knows! But, if a man earnestly loves his country, he cannot fail to be affected sorrowfully by this apostasy of our most advanced minds in regard to all that was previously our glory, our honor; and it is up to the good citizen to try to evaluate this unusual phenomenon as best he can.

We are situated in eastern Europe, that is positive, but we were never part of the East because of that. The East possesses, as we have just seen, an idea which was inlaid in men's minds since the first days of creation. It is a fertile idea which in its time led to an immense development of intelligent being. The idea established the spiritual principle at the pinnacle of society; it subordinated all powers to a supreme, inviolable law, the law of the times and profoundly understood social hierarchies and, although the idea compressed life into a confined area, it nonetheless removed it from all external influence. All that was completely foreign to us. The spiritual principle never became a factor in our society; the law of the times, tradition, has never reigned in our land; as for social hierarchies, we never had any; and finally life was never independent in our land. We are simply just a northern country, and on the basis of our ideas as much as that of our climates, far removed from the perfumed valley of Kashmir and the sacred shores of the Ganges. True, some of our provinces border on the eastern empires, but our centers are not there, our life is not there and will never be there, unless the earth's axis be displaced or unless a new cataclysm again transforms the southern formations into polar ices.

The fact is that we have never yet considered our history from the philosophical point of view; none of the great events of our past life has been depicted well, none of our great epochs has been evaluated in good faith, that is the reason for all our bizarre fantasies. German scholars discovered our annalists fifty years ago[8]; then Karamzin[9] related the facts and feats of our princes in a sonorous style; in our day mediocre writers, who possess neither German science nor the style of the illustrious prose writer, imagine that they can describe times and customs which none of us remember or love: this is the summary of our works in national history.[10] You must agree that from so few things one could never draw something to make a great people sense the

destinies awaiting it. But it is precisely that which concerns us today, it is precisely these results which form the whole interest of historical studies in our days. What the earnest thought of the times in which we live requires is a strict meditation, an impartial analysis of the moments in which the people's life is revealed with more or less intensity, for there is the future, there are the elements of its possible development. So, if such epochs are rare in your history, if life in your country was not always powerful and profound, do not shun the truth, do not feed upon lies, do not imagine then that you have lived when you drag yourself from one grave to another, but after that, if throughout this nothingness you come to a moment in which the nation began to feel itself living earnestly, in which its heart began to beat and if you hear the sound of the popular wave catching hold and mounting around you, then stop, meditate, study; your efforts will not be in vain. You will learn what your country can do in days of greatness, what it can hope for in the future. In our land, for example, such was the moment which ended the terrible drama of the interregnum[11], when the nation, after having vanquished its enemy by itself, raised upon its shield the noble house which reigns over us, a unique moment and one which cannot be admired enough if you consider the emptiness of the preceding centuries and the very special situation of our fatherland. It is evident that I am far from demanding, as people have assumed, that violent hands should be laid upon all our memories: I only say that it is time to glance lucidly upon our past, and to do it, not in order to extract old relics fallen into decay, old ideas which time has devoured, old antipathies which the good sense of our princes long since refuted, but in order to learn what we should know about our past. This is what I tried to do in a work which has remained incomplete[12], and in the piece which recently aroused national pride in such a strange way was supposed to serve as an introduction to it.[13] This initial spirit of a vividly felt idea was undoubtedly too passionate, there was undoubtedly a lack of patience in the expression, some excess at the basis of the thought, but the emotion which dominates the whole piece is not at all hostile to the fatherland; it is a somber sadness expressed in vehement words, nothing more.

More than anyone at all, believe me, I love my country dearly, I am ambitious for its glory, I know how to esteem the eminent qualities of my nation, but it is true that the patriotic sentiment which animates me is not formed exactly like that of the men whose cries upset my obscure existence and launched my barge, beached at the foot of the cross, onto their ocean of miseries. It is true that I have not learned to love my fatherland with my eyes closed, forehead bowed, mouth closed. I find that one can be useful to one's country only on the condition that one sees things clearly; I believe that the times of blind loves are over, that fanaticisms of any kind are no longer in season: I love my country in the way that Peter the Great taught me to love it. I do not possess, I admit, this sanctimonious patriotism, this lazy patriotism which manages to see everything as beautiful, which slumbers upon its illusions, and which has unfortunately afflicted many of our good minds today. I think that if we have come after the

others, it is in order to do better than the others, in order not to fall into their superstitions, into their blindnesses, into their infatuations. To reduce us to repeating the long series of follies and calamities which nations less favored than ours had to undergo would be, in my opinion, a strange misunderstanding of the role which has been allotted to us. I find that our situation is a fortunate one, provided that we know how to evaluate it, and that the ability to contemplate and to judge the world from the heights of a thought freed from unbridled passions, from miserable interests which encroach upon it, is a lovely privilege. There is more: I have the inner conviction that we are called upon to resolve most of the problems in the social order, to accomplish most of the ideas which arose in the old societies, to make a pronouncement about those very grave questions which preoccupy humanity. I have often said, and I love to repeat it, that by the very force of circumstances we have been constituted as a genuine jury for countless trials being handled before the great tribunals of the world.

See what is really taking place today in these countries which I have perhaps praised too much, but which are nonetheles the most complete models of all kinds of civilization. There when a new idea occurs, all the egoisms, vanities, and partialities on the surface of society throw themselves upon it, seize hold of it, disfigure it, make a travesty of it, and a moment later, pulverized by these diverse agents, there it lies, transported into the abstract regions in which all the sterile dusts of the human mind are accumulated. In our land, there are none of these passionate interests, these already-formed opinions, these inveterate prejudices: we approach each new truth with virgin minds. In our institutions, spontaneous works of our princes, in our customs which possess just a century of existence, in our opinions which still seek to become fixed upon the most insignificant things, nothing opposes the good things which Providence destines for humanity. It is enough for a sovereign will to be pronounced among us, in order to have all our opinions disappear, to have all our beliefs waver, to have all our minds open up to the new thought offered to them. Perhaps it would have been better to pass through all the trials experienced by the other Christian people, to draw from them as they did, powers, energies, new methods and perhaps our isolated position would have preserved us from the calamities which accompanied the long education of these peoples, but that is not the issue now; what we have to do is simply to understand properly the present character of our country as it is given to us, as it is irrevocably fixed by the nature of things, and to draw all possible profit from it. History is no longer ours, it is true, but science is ours; we could not begin the whole work of humanity again, but we can participate in its latest works. This past is no longer within our power, but the future belongs to us.

There is no possible doubt about it, the world is oppressed by its tradition; let us not envy the world for the limited circle in which it flounders; it is certain that in the heart of all nations there is a deep feeling of their life of past accomplishments which dominates their present life, and obstinate memory of days gone by which fills their todays. Let them struggle with their inexorable past. We have never lived under the rule of historical necessities; never did an

omnipotent law precipitate us into the abysses which the times dig in front of nations. Today let us not go and deliver ourselves over to these somber fatalities which we never experienced: let us rejoice in the immense advantage of being able to march forward with the awareness of the route which we have to travel, by obeying only the voice of enlightened reason with a deliberate will. Let us realize that for us there exists no absolute necessity, that we are not, thank God, situated on the rapid slope which sweeps the other people towards the destinies of which they are unaware; that it is given to us to measure each step which we make, to reason our each idea which happens to graze our intellect, that we are permitted to aspire to types of prosperity which are vaster than the prosperity of which the most ardent ministers of the religion of progress dream, and that, in order to achieve definite results, we need only a powerful will, like the one which regenerated us recently.

Well, then, is that a shabby future which I offer to my fatherland? Are those gloryless destinies which I evoke for it? However, this great future which will be realized, these beautiful destinies which will be accomplished, will undoubtedly simply be the result of this special nature of the Russian people which was pointed out in the fatal article.[14] But what was this article really? It was an intimate letter written to a woman many years ago under the impact of a painful sentiment, of an immense disappointment which the indiscreet vanity of a journalist turned over to the public, a letter which, read and reread a thousand times before publication and much harsher in the original than in the real translation in which it appeared, never provoked ill feeling from anyone at all, not even from the most patriotic idolators; finally in the letter, amid some pages of a profound devotion an historical study was inserted in which the old thesis of the superiority of Western countries was reproduced with a certain warmth, perhaps with some exaggeration. Such was this detestable writing, this incendiary pamphlet which attracted public anger, the strangest of persecutions upon the author.

Yet, I am anxious to state and am happy to have been led to make this admission: yes, there was some exaggeration in this type of indictment against a great people, whose only crime, in the last analysis, consisted in having been relegated to the extremities of the civilized world, far from the centers in which all the lights naturally had to accumulate, far from the sources from which they shined forth for centuries; there was some exaggeration in not acknowledging that we came into the world upon a sterile soil upon which empires did not flourish, which generations did not venerate, where nothing spoke to us about ages gone by, upon which there was no vestige of previous civilizations, no reminder, no monument of the world which has disappeared; there was some exaggeration in not giving credit to this Church which was so humble, so heroic sometimes, which alone consoles us for the emptiness of our annals, and which deserves the honor for every act of courage, for every beautiful devotion of our fathers; finally, there was undoubtedly some exaggeration in momentarily despairing of a nation which carries in its loins the great soul of Peter the Great.

But, after all, you must also agree that the caprices and fancies of our public are unintelligible.

Remember that a few days before the publication which concerns us, a new play was performed in our theater, in which, an unheard-of thing happened: the cutting satire of our customs evidently produced almost tragic emotion.[15] Well, never was a nation castigated in such a way, never was a country dragged through the mud, never has so much excrement been thrown in the face of the public and never, however, was a success more complete.

FRAGMENTS AND DIVERSE THOUGHTS[1]

Everyone knows that Schelling[2] is considered only to have developed the system of Spinoza[3] and to have put the finishing touches on modern pantheism.[4] From his point of view, it is certain that the visible powers of nature are only affirming themselves when acting in the world and that consequently natural phenomena appear to be logical operations in the world and not material facts. One must not, however, conclude from that, that in this way of considering the physical forces of the universe, nature is considered to be an intelligence and that there is still a reason to cry pantheism. Basically this is only the result of a philosophical phraseology which is imposed upon us by the very weakness of human language and by the need which our reason experiences to trace everything back to the idea of unity - an idea which inspired the formulation of this entire system as is known. The idealist explains nature in the language of spirituality, that's all; but it does not follow from that that he sees only spirit and idea everywhere. Behind each phenomenon of nature is an act of the spirit, but this act of the spirit in its thought remains always separated from the phenomenon. You reason, you calculate, it says, and you arrive at certain logical results which it is only up to you to realize materially; you find then facts in nature which respond to these results and which seem to you to have been produced by analogous operations; thus you conclude that there is an identity between nature and your reason. That is the point of departure of the system. But it is clear that in it one is not referring to nature itself, but to the power which determines the movements of matter, of which nature is only the whole. But, does this power reside at the base of nature or elsewhere? That is what the idealist is not aware of, and more than that, there is no reason to suggest that power inhibits nature more than any other thing. One knows very well, moreover, that the processes which human reason utilizes are not imparted by the physical world, that human reason finds them in itself, and that consequently their identity with those of nature is only the effect of the presence of nature or of the influence exerted on it by our mind, which is but a primitive fact, *i.e.*, that there are very simply two intelligences which act independently, each in an identical way, two isolated powers but of the same order. Hence, in my opinion, it is not thought and nature which are the same thing, it is the law which governs them which is the same and sole law, manifesting itself in a certain way in nature and in another way in intelligent being. One of the manifestations is known to us by way of conscience, the other by way of observation; these two orders of knowledge complement one another completely, perfect knowledge being naturally a general and universal knowledge; the particular laws of logic and of reasoning respond to the special laws of nature; there is never any contradiction between what happens in us and outside of us. Unless by an abuse of our liberty, we falsify our judgment, as it is the privilege of an intelligent being is, as everyone knows, to be able to err

just as to know. Finally there exists a real identity not between our reason and nature, but rather between our reason and another reason. There is the way one should conceive of the system of absolute identity.

The system of Fichte[5] has been the butt of attacks of the same nature. It is claimed that it would lead to nihilism, i.e., to the logical annihilation of the external world, but there is nothing to that. Fichte only proposed a doctrine of knowledge; thus it was very simple that he posed the *me,* i.e., the thing which knows, in the most absolute possible manner, but every bit of knowledge comes from there and naturally ends there: but it is not true, as Jacobi[6] claimed, for example, that he would have wished to raise the *me* on the ruins of the universe and of God. His work is not complete, that's all. One only has to read his posthumous works in order to become convinced that he was very far from denying the external world. For him it was a matter of knowing, thus it was the nature of knowledge which he had to determine; hence the subjectivity of his philosophy and this so vast part which he attributes to our reason in which, if you will, is logically absorbed all other activity and even that of God, but only in a provisional way. There is no doubt that if he had arrived at treating the Object, he would have also given its part back to it. In order to constitute the me, a thing which he does, in my opinion, in an admirable way, he gave it immeasurable proportions and set it up in the center of creation. There is all that one can reasonably reproach him for.

The Christian religion came from an idea, but it has been led by its nature to repudiate its principle for a certain time and to establish itself in fact; hence its necessary disasters. Today that fact being constituted, the Christian religion evidently aspires to become elevated anew to the pure idea. Such is the essential trait of the religious movement of which we are the witnesses. Naturally this does not mean that Christianity must completely abjure the factual and henceforth only march in the sphere of abstract thought. The time will come, and it is not very far away, when the fact and the idea will become only one thing and both will become absorbed in life, which having been composed of both, should naturally in its last phase contain both of them to the supreme degree. But before this period of the grand evolution of the spirit, marching across the centuries without stopping, takes places, the rotation towards the principle must first take place, and this latter must come out with a new *élan,* with a new power.

Before dealing with the new questions which are going to be offered for our analysis, let us retrace for a moment our steps and try to concentrate well our ideas on that which one can consider as the point of departure of the author[7], I wish to state the distinction which he established between the things of faith and those of pure reason: hence we only have to occupy ourselves with the theory of a revealed law and of an elaborated law, as he calls it.

And first, when he says *Faith,* it is clear that he is thinking only about religious faith. Well, in our opinion, that is the least philosophical point of view in the world. There are things which can only be understood by means of faith, i.e., in order to understand them, you must begin by believing in them. There

are others which could only be like articles of faith, that is to say, once you have understood them, they become beliefs. Philosophically speaking faith is thus only a moment or an epoch of human knowledge and nothing more. So, that candidly and without mental reservations, to make of religion and science two absolutely distinct regions is to return to scholasticism before Abelard[8]; it's making an anachronism of nine centuries, nothing more. I can barely understand the dogmatic theologian who in our day still rolls in the ancient ruts of the seminary, for whom the world has not budged since Alcuin[9]; for dogma is immobile and obstinate by nature. The servant of dogma may thus remain eternally nailed to his obligatory belief, but, I admit, I cannot understand the writer ambitious for the title of the contemporary spirit, envisaging religion like an inviolable world, in which intelligence has permission to enter only on condition of annihilating itself. Then who today ignores the fact that faith is one of the most powerful and most fruitful agents of thought? As often as one comes to knowledge by faith, so often to faith by knowledge. As a consequence, between both there does not exist a clearly traced line. Knowledge always implies a certain degree of faith, just as faith always implies a certain degree of knowledge. At the basis of faith, there is necessarily some knowledge, just as at the basis of knowledge there is necessarily some faith. Finally, we could not conceive of a thing without believing in it in a certain way, just as we could not believe in a thing without conceiving of it up to a certain point.

Moreover, what are the natural bases of philosophy? The Me and the non-Me, the internal world and the external world, the subject and the object. Whether one accepts these primitive facts or not is irrelevant; one could not seriously make some philosophy without starting out from there. But for us, what are these facts which reasonably cannot be either demonstrated by themselves nor deduced from any preceeding fact? Things of faith. Then when the philosophical work is accomplished and you have come to some certitude or other, what is the logical form in which this certitude is clothed in your mind? That of a belief, a belief which is imposed even by your reason. We cannot breach this circle without clashing against its perimeters; beyond that is absolute doubt, perfect ignorance, non-being. Thus, does not the tossing of faith out of philosophy result in annihilating philosophy itself? Doesn't it render the very labor of reason impractical? Even more, does it not place the intellectual principle in nothingness?

Remark that the human spirit has admitted from time immemorial certain truths such as articles of faith, *a priori* truths, elementary truths, without which all operation of the mind is unimaginable, consequently prior to its own movement there are truths which respond in a way to this force of projection which clashed with inert matter one day and launched the worlds into space. For a long time the human spirit lived from these truths and for a long time they were sufficient. The proper development of the human spirit led it then to new truths which, in turn, became beliefs. Such is the natural march of intellectual things.

Faith is placed at the two limits of the road traveled by the human spirit, be it in the individual or in humanity, in general. Before knowing, the human spirit believes and when it knows, it believes again. It always sets out from faith to arrive at faith. To summarize, don't you make an act of faith twenty times a day, without religion being involved at all? Then how can you wish to enclose the multiple beliefs of the human spirit in the unique sphere of religious feeling? Impossible. Let us come to the other system.

What is a law? The principle in virtue of which a thing takes place or should take place in order to come to its possible perfection. Thus, every law pre-exists: we can only know it or ignore it; whether we know it or whether we ignore it, it does not exist any less and does not function any less in the sphere which is attributed to it. One cannot repeat too often that in the moral order or the one of liberty, just as in the material or destined order, all things are made according to a law which we know or which we do not know, with this sole difference that when we know the one, we are obliged to conform ourselves to it, given that it is the law of our being and the condition of our progress, and that when we know the other, we only have nothing to do but to apply it to our usage, be it as teaching or as material utility. As for this knowledge, we can obtain it in many ways, either as the solitary procedure of the individual mind, or by the spontaneous act of supreme reason manifesting itself in the reason of man, or by the slow march of the universal spirit across the centuries. But in no possible case could we either invent or create the law itself.

Every law, if it is just and true - and it is only in this case that it is really law - existed from all eternity in the divine intelligence. One day arrives when a man comes to know it, when it is revealed to him in some manner or other; then the law falls into the human conscience, then the human legislator has encountered the supreme legislator, and from this moment onwards it is for us a law of the world. Such is the absolute genesis of all our political legislations, including moral ones and others. It is undoubtedly permissible from the social point of view to admit the fiction of a legislative power, possessed by man, but this is not so at all in general philosophy. Man, dominated by an imperial necessity can well exert on those similar to him and on himself a legitimate legislature, but he must know that what he calls positive law, civil law, criminal law, all the laws which he fabricates in his moments of leisure and which he inserts in diverse codes, are, in effect, only such in so far as they conform to pre-existing laws, which according to the expression of Cicero[10], "are not something imagined by the human spirit, nor a will of the people, but something eternal". These are the laws in virtue of which societies endure and act whether they are aware of the influence of law on them or not. Man must know that, when the laws which he purports to give himself appear false or bad, that does not signify anything but that the laws are contrary to true laws, or else, that they are not laws at all. For, one other point, it is not we who make the laws, on the contrary it is the laws who make us. But we can take for the law that which is not and that is what we do only all too often in physics as in morality. Finally, as law is a cause and not

an effect, is it not a misconception of the very idea of law to make of it a product of human reason? But, I ask you, if this is so, then what is an elaborated law, a law which did not even exist yesterday, which only exists from today, which, consequently could not exist at all? One cannot conceive of it.

There, moreover, is the most correct way of envisaging matter according to us. From the objective point of view there are two laws, that of the physical world and that of the moral world. The first is destined to cause physical beings to endure and nature which is the whole of them, the other to cause intelligent beings to endure and society which is the whole of those beings there, all in the way which belongs to each being and to each order of beings in particular. But it is clear that these two laws are in reality only one sole and same law, which considered objectively, operates in an absolutely identical manner in the one and the other sphere. This universal law is the law of *life* or of *Being*. And, it is also evident that it is not susceptible to development or to elaboration. That which is developed and that which is elaborated is life, and it is being; the law remains invariably the same. Certainly man, in virtue of his intelligent and free nature, can ignore the laws of his nature, know them more or less perfectly, and disobey the law when he knows it, but this does not alter the fact that the law subsists always the same and acts upon him always in the same manner. The progress of the human spirit does not consist in imposing laws of its invention on the world, but in approaching incessantly towards the more perfect knowledge of those laws which govern the world. Man does not elaborate the laws which had been primitively taught to him by his creator, but in the measure in which he advances in time, he discovers new laws which were unknown to him, and he learns to know better than which he already learned and to find new applications for the laws. Thus it is, for example, that knowledge of the specially revealed law extends every day more and more among men, whereas the law itself is not elaborated, it is not developed. Amid all these new powers to which it gives birth every day in order to satisfy the growing needs of humanity itself, it remains immutable and just as it emanated a long time ago from the depths of divine reason.

One can say, I believe, that the power to create has been accorded to man only in the sphere of art: there is the real domain of his creations, the only world where it is given to him to cause reality to come out of nothingness, to evoke life by an art of his will. Besides that we can only seek and sometimes find the real. But, however infinite is our power there, it is still subordinated to certain principles which we have not even imagined, which pre-existed in all our creations, which acted on us like all eternal truths long before we had any knowledge of them. The idea of the beautiful, no more than any other true idea, was not engendered by man. He found it imprinted in the entire creation spread out around him under a thousand various forms, written on each object of nature in ineffable characters. He understood it, he incorporated it, and this fertile principle caused all this multitude of work, sometimes sublime, sometimes charming, to burst forth, with which he has peopled the spheres of fantasy and with which he has decorated the face of the earth.

It would be definitely good to observe that all that we have just said has been said and repeated a thousand times by all the serious minds of the century, but it is very natural that we know nothing about it: the chronology of Europe is not ours at all. We assist in the century, but we do not form a part of it. One should not be mistaken here, our role in the world however great, however glorious it may be, is still only purely political. Thus, the movement of ideas, properly speaking, does not concern us yet. Moreover, among the vagabond emanations of science which the winds from the West push from time to time towards our faraway shores, there are so many which get lost in the trajectory, and so many which become petrified by the glacial wind of the North! Nonetheless, there is no more a desolate spectacle, one must admit, than that of an eminent mind, debating between the need to anticipate what souls of the elite always experience on the too slow march of humanity and the natives of a juvenile civilization which serious science has not yet visited, and which has thus been hurled, in spite of itself, into all sorts of bizarre imaginings, into ambitious inventions and admittedly sometimes into profound errors.

Man only rarely is aware of the good which he does and very often that which seems produced by an effort of superhuman virtue costs him nothing. Our most apparently heroic acts are those in which there enters the least amount of disinterestedness. It must be that the unique moving force of our generous actions may be the sympathy which we feel for the miseries of our neighbor. This moving force is ordinarily only the pleasure which we experience in exercising the energetic faculties of our soul, making us feel strong. The same need which pushes us so much to run ahead of a useless peril on other occasions causes us to risk our lives in order to come to the aid of one of our fellow human beings. Danger has its attraction; courage is not only a virtue, it is also happiness. Man is made in such a way that he experiences the greatest felicities given to him to enjoy by practicing good - a marvelous combination of providence, in which man is the instrument which providence utilizes in order to reach its goal and the realization of the greatest possible happiness for all created beings.

Yes, Turks are barbaric villains, but the rest of the world need not fear Turkish barbarism, whereas the rest of the world has much to fear from the barbarism of a certain other country. Moreover, one can combat Turkish barbarism in its own area, not so the other barbarism. There you have the entire question.[11]

As long as Russian barbarism was not menacing Europe, as long as it was not proclaiming itself the sole and unique civilization, the only unique religion, one left it alone. But from the day when Russian barbarism came to position itself opposite Europe as a moral and political power, Europe had to rise up *en masse*.

One will not, I think, dispute the fact that the logical apparatus of the most learned mandarin of the celestial empire does not function any differently than that of a professor from Berlin. Very well, given an entire nation influenced

neither by the traditions of antiquity, nor by the religious hierarchy which fought against temporal power, nor by Scholastic philosophy, nor by feudalism and its chivalry, nor by Protestantism, nor finally by anything of that which worked heavily upon the minds of the West - well, can such a nation be constructed differently from that of people who lived, grew up and still live under the effect of all the other things? Some men of genius, some elite minds, in order to rise up among us, have undoubtedly only to make something of this heritage of thought and of feelings. But it is not any less regrettable that the nation *en masse* has been without any real heritage from all these antecedents by the historical arrangement of the world. No doubt, the moral action of Christianity was powerfully exerted upon us, but as regards its logical action it is impossible not to recognize that it was almost nil in our country. Let us add that that is one of the most interesting questions which the philosophy of our history will have to occupy itself the day when that philosophy will come into the world.

One forgets too often that the Saviour did not come into the world to propose enigmas for it, but to give the world the very word "enigma".

There are people who tell you that the Christian religion is not meant to get mixed up in the social order, that Christianity has done nothing for society, that Christianity should do nothing for society, that Christianity addresses itself only to the individual, and that the goods which it promises refer only to future life. In effect, what has Christianity taught men that could have some relationship to their welfare in this world? Nothing at all: it taught men only that they were brothers, that's all.

One must surely say it, there is such a way of loving one's country that even the most unworldly is capable of: witness M. V.[12] Above all, one owes the truth to one's country as to one's friends.[13]

What should be the name of this child?

Do you admit many kinds of civilizations?[14]

Do you believe that a country, which at the very moment when it is called upon to seize the future rightfully belonging to it, instead goes astray to the point of completely allowing this future to be lost by its own clumsy hands, is truly worthy of this future?[15]

Do you believe that the old Orient such as history has made it and the very nature of the human spirit could be replaced by a new Christian Orient?

Are you really certain that this child could not have been a monster?

Scarcely less than a half a century ago the sovereigns of Russia ceased to distribute by the thousands the cultivators of the state lands to their courtesans.[16] But, I ask you, how could the most simple notions of justice, law, or of any sort of legality take root under a regime which from one day to the next transformed whole populations of free men into slaves! Thanks to the liberal sovereign[17] whom we saw among us, to the generous conqueror whom we embraced with our favors, this odious application of absolute power in that which is the most malevolent for the people, the perversion of their social reason, is not practiced any more in Russia. But alone the presence of the servitude such as it is

constituted here continues to hold, soil and debase everything in this country. No one escapes its fatal influence, and perhaps least of all the sovereign. Surrounded since the cradle by men, possessors of their fellow men whose fathers were serfs themselves the breath of slavery penetrates his being through all his pores and influences his intelligence even more actively as he believes himself sheltered from its action.[18] For example, it would be a grave error to imagine that its action is only exercised upon this unfortunate part[19] which suffers the oppressive weight. It is completely the opposite, namely, one must study its influence upon the classes which profit from it, not upon those which suffer from it.[20] Thanks to his eminently ascetic beliefs, thanks to the temperament of his race, little concerned for an uncertain improvement, and finally thanks to the spaces which often separate him from his master, the Russian serf, one must admit, has not as much to complain about as one might believe. Moreover, his current situation is only the natural result of his previous situation. It is not violence which reduced him to servitude, it is the logical march of things unfolding from the basis of his intimate life, from his religious feelings, from his nature. Do you want proof of it? Look at the free man in Russia! No apparent difference between him and the serf. In fact, I find in the resigned air of the latter something more dignified, more at ease than in the vague and worried look of the former. The fact is that there is nothing in common between Russian slavery and that which has existed or which still exists in other countries of the world.[21] Constituted[22] as it was in antiquity as it is in our day in the United States of America it had no other effect than that which naturally results from this detestable institution, misery of the slave, corruption of the master; but the effect of slavery in Russia is very different in a vast way.

We recently observed, even though he is a slave in the full sense of the word, the Russian serf does not bear the mark on his person. He is not separated from the other classes of society either by customs, public opinion, or racial difference; in the home of his master he divides the work with the freeman[23], in the countryside he lives mixed together with the peasants from the free communes, everywhere he is found inter-mingled with the free subjects of the empire without any apparent distinction. Everything in Russia bears the stamp of servitude, customs, tendencies, instruction and even liberty itself - in so far as any liberty can even be said to exist in this *milieu*.[24]

The more one thinks about it, the more one becomes persuaded that something very extraordinary is happening now in our midst. This thing which has not even yet come to the state of a simple idea, since it has not yet any well-drafted expression, contains, however, a social question of high import. It concerns nothing less than to know whether a nation - once having recognized that it had taken the wrong route for a century - can one fine day by the simple act of a reflective will-power return upon its footpath, rip it up and recommence its career, rebind the broken thread of its life at the place where the nation left it one day - one does not know too much about how. But one must admit we are

on the eve if not of a revolution of this singular problem then at least of a tentative solution, to experiment with a social operation which the most ardent utopists have not even dared to dream about in their most insolent dreams. It would undoubtedly be very hazardous to assign the probable epoch of this event, for, as popular emotions do not obey the dynamic laws of the universe at all, the event is not based on the power of the usual forces. On the contrary, it is rather due to the powerlessness of society that social movement is produced most often. It is permissible to believe that the moment of a brilliant manifestation of national feeling, at least from the literate fraction of the nation, is quite near. Perhaps you are going to believe that it is a revolution like those of Western Europe which menace us - be reassured: we are not there at all, thank God. The Western world and we have parted from too different points to ever end up in identical results. Moreover, there is something immobile in the Russian people, something necessarily inalterable and that is its indifference towards the nature of the power which rules it. No people in the world has better comprehended than we this famous scriptural text: *all power comes from God*.[25] Established power is always sacred for us.[26] It is well-known that it is the family which is the basis of our social system: the Russian people thus are able to see in power nothing else but paternal authority exercised with more or less rigor, that's all. Every prince, no matter who he is, is for the people, a father. For example, we do not say, I have the right to do this, we say, such a thing is permitted: something else is not. In our ideas it is not the law which punished the culpable citizen, it is a father chastizing the intractable child. Our taste for the domestic regime is such that we squander with happiness the rights of paternity upon all those on whom we depend.[27] The idea of legitimacy, the idea of law, for the Russian people, is nonsense, for example, observe this mess of bizarre successions which followed the reign of Peter the Great, and especially the appalling episode of the inter-regnum. It is clear that, if it had been in the nature of the nation to understand these ideas, she would have understood that the prince for whom she shed her blood had no right to the throne, and from then on the first usurper, as well as all the others, could not have found these multitudes of adherents, whose ravages caused even the foreign bands to tremble in their turn.[28] No force in the world could ever make us depart from the order of ideas which has made all our history, which still makes all the poetry of our existence, which admits only a granted law and rejects every kind of natural law. Thus, although something of it could come to the superior levels of society, the people *en bloc* will never take part in it: hands crossed, a favorite attitude of the man of pure Russian blood, he will see his new masters made and will salute them, according to his custom, with the title of fathers; for one must not be mistaken, it will still be masters whom one must give him: any other regime he will reject with disdain or hatred.

What does the new school want?[29] To rediscover, to restore the national principle which the nation in a moment of distraction, it is said, allowed it once to be filched by Peter the Great, a principle without which in any case no true

progress is possible for any people whomsoever. It is certain - and we are the first to agree - that nations like individuals[30] could not advance a foot in the career of the progress or of the development which they are destined to pursue without a profound sense of their individuality without the awareness of what they are, even more nations could not even exist deprived of this sense, of this awareness: but there is precisely what proves the error of your teaching, for a people never lost its nationality without ceasing at the same time to exist; but, if I am not mistaken, we exist a bit.[31]

The more one reflects about the influence which Christianity exercised on society, the more one remains persuaded that in the general plan of providence the Western church was principally instituted in view of the social development of humanity, and that her history is only a logical deduction of the organizing principal deposed in its breast.[32] One can condemn the means which the Western church used to achieve its goal, but one should recognize that these means were not only the most efficacious but even the sole practical ones for the different epochs which it had traversed. Faithful to its mission, the Western church never detoured from the impulse which was imprinted on it. An admirable instinct concerning its role guided it constantly across the centuries of battles, disasters, and unheard-of triumphs. Finally, if one is incapable of denying that the Western church was ambitious and intolerant and that it did not disdain the goods of the earth, one must agree also that it is upon these conditions alone that God's design was accomplished.

Isn't the realization of the idea confided in one what counts above all else? Thus, all should be naturally subordinated to this supreme rule; is it not absurd to reproach the Western church for having been consequential, ardent, passionate in its task? Where would the world be if the Western church had only tossed back and forth between the different heresies which arose from the first days of its establishment and which did not cease to surge around it all the way to the time when the heresies all ended absorbed in this great heresy of the sixteenth century[33] which claimed to establish the non-existence of its impalpable church in the place of the reality of the absolute church? If you ask me whether a perfect awareness of the work being accomplished around it was in the heart of each of its members, I would say to you that I don't think so, given the fact that this awareness will not be possible in God's Church until it will have run the entire cycle of human reason, until after having exhausted the entire cycle of the finite spirit, it will enter finally, never to leave, into the order of the infinite spirit. But one could not, however, doubt that the Western church always had a profound feeling, a feeling which was concentrated in some elite souls, in some spirits crowned with the sacred halo, who enlightened the entire sphere of intelligences composing the Christian community and penetrated each of them with intense energy, with all the truth of an intimate and personal feeling.

The eastern church was evidently destined for something completely different. It should consequently march in other ways. Its particular role was to make visible the power of Christianity reduced to its sole forces; it perfectly

filled this sublime mission. Come into the world on the winds of the desert, then transported into another desert where, living amid the solitude which barbarism had made for it, it had naturally to become ascetic and contemplative above all else.[34] Thus every kind of ambition was forbidden to it by the very nature of its origin. Also, one must admit, the eastern church pushed submission to excess, also it was pleased to efface itself in all imaginable ways, to kneel before all the princes whoever they were, faithful or unfaithful, orthodox or schismatic, Mongol or Seljuk, and when the oppression became excessive, or when the foreign yoke came to beat upon the eastern church, rarely did it know how to do anything but inundate their temple courtyards with tears, or, prostrate in the dust to invoke the aid of heaven in mental prayer. All that is perfectly true, but it is also true that the eastern church could not do otherwise, that it would have lost its destiny had it tried to assume another character. Only one time in the midst of the glories of the Russian patriarch, it dared to be ambitious, and we know what this whim of pride against nature cost the eastern church.[35] No matter what it is to this church so humble, so resigned, so prostrate that our country owes not only the most beautiful pages of its history but even its preservation. And here then is the lesson which the eastern church has been called to give to the world: a great nation completely engendered by Christ's religion, such is the interesting spectacle which we offer to the meditation of serious spirits![36]

We have before us the work of a young French philosopher, a man of much spirit in many ways, profoundly detaching himself from the philosophical band of his country. But unfortunately he is also completely ignorant concerning that which is going on beyond the Rhine and judges philosophy, in general, based on that which is professed in the Collège de France. But, one must admit, the country which saw the father of modern philosophy born has not sheltered its own heritage: it is neither to Mr. Cousin[37] nor to Mr. Jouffroy[38] that this beautiful succession will become awarded in our day.

Our author, for example, cries out against the claim of a well-known school in France which would wish to abolish personal feeling in order to replace it with social feeling. In that he is perfectly correct, but he is wrong to confound this puerile doctrine with the philosophical doctrines of Germany. We take the liberty of assuring him that there is nothing in common between the humanitarian theories of France and a serious philosophy which is preoccupied with completely different things outside of private questions of society, in which logical and political anarchies have come to meet. What this philosophy seeks is to determine the link which exists between the external world and the internal world, to reconcile the idea with reality, questions which the human spirit has posed since time immemorial, questions which Christianity resolved in its own way, with the instruments of faith but which have not yet been resolved with those of reason. Thus, one can say that its work is the work of Christianity, transported or continued on the terrain of pure thought, so one can see that this is far cry from Fourierism, from human living in barracks in phalansters. Social

questions are found at the end of that, true, seeing that all the solutions to the problem of life are contained therein, but in the philosophic order the solutions should enfold from themselves, once the spirit will be definitively constituted, the idea achieved, the logical fact accomplished: until then philosophy has absolutely nothing to say about these matters.

I believe that there is enough general agreement on this point, that the moral individual, engendered by Christianity, is made differently from the way the moral individual of paganism was made: Very well, it is the logical individual that philosophy is occupied at reconstructing today. Thus, who speaks to you about annihilating the *me,* to substitute in its place some abstract awareness or other of humanity *en masse*? It all comes down only to rebuilding it on a more secure basis, that's all. If you wish to know what is the process by which philosophy counts on coming to this desired result, here it is: Philosophy first looks for something around itself in which the great synthetic factor which it seeks to realize could be found already realized or rather something in which the separation of the two elementary principles of the world and their apparent antagonism never took place, and it is in the idea of *absolute existence* that philosophy finds its unknown. For absolute existence belongs only to *absolute spirit:* hence there is the type which it is henceforth going to study, meditate upon, and analyze. Philosophy gathers in its manifestations everywhere where it will find them, it will return to them one by one, it will pass through all the centuries, it will arrive at the actual fact, the immense résumé of the accomplished time, it will try finally to discover the fact which is not yet realized but which already hovers in the nebulous future; then it will hand over all this work to human thought and will invite it to continue it, following the methods which it will have furnished to it. Thus, far from destroying the *subject* first after having become perfectly penetrated with the awareness of its nature, it is upon the subject, on the contrary, that philosophy imposes all its task, whereas, on the other hand, in giving us the clear perception of the *object,* philosophy releases them one by one from their vague abstraction, introduces them to reality, and in this manner works out this accord between them which it should find only at the end of its labor in a certain way from that very moment on. Such is the philosophy of our days.

Extract of an analysis of the Historiosophia of Mr. Cieszkowsky by Mr. Michelet of Berlin (Translated from German) [Hence not translated here][39]

Among[40] the causes which thwart our intellectual development and impose upon it a particular character one must observe two things, the lack of these centers, of these hearths where the living forces of the country are accumulated, where ideas are expanded, from which fertile principles lighten up the surface of the soil; and the lack of these standards around which are grouped masses of imposing and compact intellects. An idea arrives from I don't know where, borne by some misguided breeze, breaks through somehow all sorts of barriers, starts to filter in an unperceived moment across our minds, and then one day it evaporates and goes off to become engulfed in some obscure corner of our

national intelligence, never to reappear again: such is the march of ideas in our country.[41] Each people carries in its breast a particular element which imprints its seal upon its social being, which determines its pilgrimage across the centuries and marks its place in humanity.[42] This constituted element in our case is the geographical element, there -that is what people don't want to understand. Our entire history is produced by the nature of the immense topography which has fallen as our lot.[43] It is the nature of the immense topography which causes us to diverge in countless directions and scatters us in space from the very first days of our existence; it also imposes on us a blind submission to the force of things, to every power which proclaimed itself our master. Thus in a *milieu* made in such a way there is no regular, daily contact of intellects. In this complete isolation of individual reason there is no logical development of reason, no spontaneous élan of the mind towards a possible amelioration, none of these general common feelings among souls which might reunite them in unison, in enormous blocs before which all the material powers must necessarily bow. In a word, we are nothing but a geological product of the vast latitudes in which some unknown centrifical force launched us. We are but a curious page in the physical geography of the earth. Moreover, as long as our material importance is enormous in the world, so long our moral importance is null. We are a very great political fact and the most minimal of moral facts. Nevertheless, this physiology of the country, which harbors such great inconveniences no doubt in the present, can offer great advantages in the future and in deceiving oneself about the first, one risks to deprive oneself of the second.[44]

a. Cause and effect are not different; the principle and the product are the same thing. One could not exist without the other, for the principle isn't such except in so far as it produces such an effect or engenders such a thing. In the individual often predominance of one or of the other occurs: it is only in the universe, in the totality of things that the subject and the object are mingled perfectly together, that the identity is complete. The system of Schelling.

b. Having recognized the *non-me* and admitted its action on the *me*, knowing if there exists in the *non-me,* something else, which in relationship to itself, may also be a *me;* and if it exists in effect what is its nature and its influence upon the primitive me; such is the problem posed by Fichte.

c. The march of the human spirit is nothing else but a continuous reflexion. Once having attained the final term of this universal meditation, human reason will have obtained all its power. Hegel.[45]

In this first part of his system or rather in the first epoch of his philosophical career Fichte claimed that there was nothing real in the world but knowledge, and as all knowledge is necessarily contained in the *me*, there was really nothing existing but the *me*. Opposed to this doctrine is the fact that knowledge supposes naturally a known object, and consequently there was still something else other than the me and knowledge. Later Fichte abandoned this teaching, without however acknowledging it openly, without perhaps even acknowledging it to himself, since he never ceased to consider his new point of view as a

corollary of the first. No matter what, if one wishes to evaluate the teachings of Fichte well, one must only adhere to that which we willingly call his second way and consider the first part of the system only as a preliminary study, a powerful analysis of the nature of the *me* or of the subject, a study which belongs to history.

Do you believe that it would be useful for Europe as also for Russia herself that this latter were the arbitrator of the world? Another question. Between the preservation of Turkey as against the all-mightiness of Russia, what should Europe choose?

What is this war? A family quarrel between true believers. [Translator's note: the next sentence is in Russian.] Too bad that our poor Slavs played the third section.[46]

I am of the opinion of Mgr. Innocent[47]; I do not doubt that the scepter of the world rests in the hands of the Russian emperor. I am only surprised at one thing, that the holy prelate had not thought about tracing the tableau of prosperous things which the world is going to enjoy under this guardian scepter.

It is very permissible, I believe, that every good Russian who seriously loves his country ought to owe a grudge, in this supreme moment, against those people who pushed it by their direct or indirect influence, into this disastrous war, who misunderstood her moral and material resources, who took their systems for the true politics of the country, their incomplete studies for the true national feelings, finally in intoning their premature triumphal songs, misled public opinion when there was still time to stop it on its rapid pathway where it was swept along by giddiness or by blundering.

It is permissible, I believe, in the presence of our disasters not to share the tendencies of an extravagant patriotism which has brought the country to the brink of the precipice which the country believes it can get out of by persisting in its dreams and refusing to lose hope in the situation created for the country by it.[48]

It is permissible to think, I believe, that when providence calls a people to great destinies, she furnishes at the same time the means to accomplish those great destinies, she causes powerful intellects to arise from within the people in order to direct them, she illuminates the entire nation with brilliant lights and does not deliver her future to the incapacity of her chiefs, to the infatuation of some lazy heads, nourished by success in the salons and among coteries.

It is very permissible, I believe, for every good Russian, who prefers the good of his country over the triumph of some fashionable ideas, to remark that in the universe there exist only two countries both afflicted by a national party and that one of these countries is at the point of disappearing from the world scene thanks to this very patriotism and that the other is menaced by seeing itself stripped of the title of power of the first rank, the fruit of a century of generous and perservering efforts, of wisdom and of courage.

It appears that there are many ways of loving and of serving one's country. First of all, there is that....[49]

Thank God, I have not aided my country in going astray either in prose or in verse.

Thank God, I have not pronounced a word which could serve to misdirect public opinion.

Thank God, I have always loved my country in its own interest, not in mine.

Thank God, I did not misunderstand either the moral resources or the material resources of my country.

Thank God, I did not take systems and theories for the good of my country.

Thank God, I did not prefer success in the salons or in coteries to that which I considered the true interest of my country.

Thank God, I did not compromise either with prejudice or with superstition in order to preserve a social position, conceded by the ignorance of some fashionable ideas.

In my opinion, you are all educators.

Do you believe that a pressure of thirty years by a violent government, obstinate in its way of seeing and doing, is not enough to debase the intelligence of a nation which had not singularly exerted its intelligence?

It is thought that we have something to do to France, or to England. Stupid. It is to civilization, to the entire civilization that we have something to do and not only to the results of this civilization but to this civilization itself, as instrument, as belief, exerted, worked out, perfected in a thousand years of laborious effort. There is what we have something to do, we who date from yesterday, among whom no organ has yet been sufficiently exercised or developed, not even memory.[50]

It is neither the character of the English nation nor its wisdom which constitutes it; it is its history. But once constituted, it is natural that the English people are wiser than other people. The Anglo-Saxon race is not a privileged race[51]; it is England which is a privileged country whose history is a bit of good luck from one end to the other. It is not the English people who bestowed upon itself its constitution, it is the Norman barons who tore it from their Norman kings. The old institutions of Alfred[52] would have served for nothing without the sword of the feudal baron. Previously one said that it was the institutions which made the people, today one says that it is the people who make the institutions.

One and the other is true. But one must appreciate the factual chronology. First history makes the institution; then the educated people continue the work of history by their institutions, they achieve or debase it in so far as they are more or less gifted. Such is the natural march of the social movement. To make people into privileged races or cursed races is absurd.

...as in that which I just told you, uselessness is *impersonality* and it is by this that the good and the beautiful are joined and merge into the most absolute and most vast idea of morality.

There is no right except that of *prescription*. In the moral order as in nature, nothing is done today which was not done yesterday. The link which joins together moral things among themselves is the same which joins physical things: continuity, succession. Something new, never.

Whether that is the right of my spirit, whether it is that of the world - that is what I don't know and it does not matter; what I know is that outside of this circle, I cannot imagine anything by myself. How could I have a right at this hour which I did not have a moment before? From where would it have come to me? I can acquire a new right undoubtedly, but this is not the kind of right referred to, it is from this then that this right is acquired, from the primitive right, from the right which gives the right. Thus, the metaphysics of right does not consist at all in demonstrating to whom such and such a right belongs, but to make it very clear where such and such a right resides by the very nature of things.

For example, if a man came into the world with evident superiority over all his fellow humans, a natural right of superiority would revert to him. But, as all men are born with the same capacities, there is no natural superiority in any sense at all. However, since man is made in such a way that he can be put in possession of a real superiority over other men in the course of his life, the right of *authority* necessarily resides in the hands of some among us: one cannot create it, one can, however, constitute it, but that is all that it is possible to do. And this right does not belong to the individual who finds himself by chance invested with it; it resides in the power of nature of which the person is in possession. To call this right there into question, would be the same as calling into question the force which weighs down bodies, which retains the sun, which makes the world turn. Such is the principle which bases all *power* in society; not certainly, as has been imagined, some sort of tacit or articulated pact which never could have taken place rationally since society was already all made.

Material possession has no other foundation either. What does one do when one disputes the ownership of a thing with someone? One proves that he did not possess it the moment before, that's all.

If one could reach to the first link in the chain which Jupiter holds in his hand, one would come to the beginning of everything, of right as of everything else. Meanwhile let us recognize that in this world, the past makes the present; thus, one must seek principle and cause of everything in time: nothing outside of time.

Finally right can only accord liberty to act in conformity with the universal law; that is why the first of all is that of its own conservation. For, general law is all comprised in continuity, in the persistence of beings: mechanical continuity, vital continuity, intellectual continuity, moral continuity, all the modes of universal existence. In the clear idea of this existence is found the rule of every moral fact, as the real law of the physical world would be found in the clear idea of physical life.

In human reason there is something so necessary that, if one were to remove it, there would no longer be reason. It is with that that reason begins to experiment, all its subsequent action is only a result of this first act.

This something is certain notions which are like the organs of intelligence. One calls them faculties of the soul. But what are these faculties of the soul? Is there anything in the human spirit but ideas, again ideas and always ideas? Is the human spirit anything else but the ensemble of ideas? And how is an idea produced if not by flowing from another idea? A strange fantasy! To want to amount to the origin of our ideas is question of experience, of empiricism. Since we do not preserve the memory of our first years, then how can you expect to pursue human reason up to its birth? No way. Since we ourselves are not witnesses of that which happens in us from the beginning then who could be? As for the speculative philosopher observing the child, in order for him to conceive of that which occurs in this little brain, he would have to have been philosopher and child at the same time, or he would have had to retain the memory of that which occured in his own brain at this time. And still, what good would it do? Thus study the embryo in the mother's womb, for it is then that life begins, not by the light of day.

People ask when intelligence came to the human being. Well, what do I know about it? What I know is that man would not have any of this intelligence at any age of his life any more than at the age of the embryo, unless in one way or another, intelligence was poured into him from outside.

Every system be it psychological, ideological, anthropological etc., dealt only with isolated man, individual man, alone among his fellow creatures: that is physiology, natural history, but that is not philosophy. *Philosophy only knows man made by man in the course of time.*

Vanity makes the drunkard, pride the naughty. The same individual is stupid or ferocious, accordingly as he is filled by vanity or by pride. Wait, the moment of the excess has passed? Well then he becomes reasonable and good.

Most men appear to us not as they really are, but such as we make them. That is because we always put a stake in their vanity or their pride. But there is a motive to hold a grudge only against ourselves, which is what angers us in our relationships with our fellow humans.

As for ourselves, well, one finds that one has been either foolish in misunderstanding oneself or else wicked in detesting oneself, and sometimes good and nice in bowing before oneself. And all that for what? It's because one has been either vain or arrogant or else neither one nor the other. Perhaps one is never vain and proud at the same time, I don't know, but as one was for a moment, one could be both drunk and cruel at the same time: and having come to that, to return to one's true disposition, one could not, for nothing would remain in the soul to enlighten it, neither heart nor reason.

Such a man is in such a situation that his vanity is continually excited, his pride continually offended. That person is never what he effectively is, not even in his dreams; in every moment of his life he is what the deadly situation in which he is thrown makes of him. It is from these situations that inaccessible

characters, so tiring to see, so unfortunate to themselves, are made. Frequently in society one meets often good people, even sometimes people of merit, but spoiled by their evil star and by their inability to know how to extract themselves from circumstances. They are hated; they should be pitied.

The most favorable position in my opinion, for the calm of passions for the complete utilization of our faculties is a well-thought-out submission, willingly deferred to a perfectly legitimate authority. For a crowd of people, for example, the most desirable thing would be to be under the influence of a man whose judgment and character they have learned to respect, where in order to be happy they need only know how to submit to live under the shadow of a reason which is not theirs. They refrain, more miserable than submissive. Such is the majority of men.

Must one consider *inspiration*[53] as a phenomenon so supernatural that it annihilates the ordinary course of nature? Not at all. It is enough to regard it as a consequence of the direct influence of an unknown principle upon the forces of moral nature, by means of which they acquire an intensity infinitely more considerable than they would have had in their given state.

Should one understand that this exaltation of the intelligent power does not come from the creature but from the creator, that it is co-ordinated with a general plan, that it does not end with an individual effect but that it relates to a universal effect, as everything immediately emanated from God, then one would be perfectly orthodox, and then one would have even more of an advantage over the excessive dogma in that better than it, one would comprehend the object of faith. Likewise, revealed knowledge is nothing else but knowledge superior to the knowledge acquired by the common ways of reason: in no way is it supernatural knowledge.

In manifesting itself to man's spirit, God does not communicate Himself completely: *no one has seen the face of the Father*. Hence there is no reversal of the given order: prodigious augmentation of natural powers, that's all. The impulse which has been given in primitive times to it is renewed a second time by the same hand which gave it the impulse in the first place. Where is the miracle?

Moreover, does one know well all the means of knowledge which the soul possesses? Does one know all the combinations, all the possible effects of its faculties? Why, in certain epochs could not new forces, new capacities be developed by the concourse of particular circumstances reborn again in human nature? In other times could they not be extinguished for lack of nourishment or of exercise? Another time could they not appear again and ever so according to a determined plan of providence? What would there still be to marvel at about that? Finally, if there is anything in man such as a free will, it should have certainly some analogue, some identity with the supreme will, nothing but power of liberty also, no more, no less. And then how to know that which this human will can obtain of power, energy, and expanse when it comes to meet with the other will, to become fused with it or to become lost in it?

Finding himself in England without preamble, without any warning, a foreigner feels himself singularly offended by all the mechanisms of this industrial machine which forms the exterior life of the English. No thought to communicate with; an enormous movement, that is all that he finds; moreover nothing with which to sympathize. The fact is that only active thought is produced externally in England, reflective thought, tranquil thought is found there relegated to the most intimate sections of the domestic interior or of the soul; it is there that one must go to seek it. And then having arrived at this intimate section, the singular mix of reserve and of eccentricity which characterizes the English spirit, so well made to derail the newcomer, will push you away undoubtedly still more. But also once installed in the hearth of *Old England,* a crowd of happiness and sweet sympathies will come to surround you and compensate for the ennui of the first encounter. And once the day comes when you pronounce the word *home* - at the heart of an English family in the lovely country house with the green lawn, with beech trees and oak trees - as the native Englishman pronounces it, then I don't doubt that you will let go without regret from your memory the remembrance of your country, even if this country were dear Russia.[54]

In Germany one sails along incessantly on the ocean of abstraction; the German is there more at home, more at ease than on earth; that is why there one carries intemperance of thought to the extreme. A very simple thing; why should pure thought without application, without body be restrained in its sailing? Where is the danger? When pure thought wishes to enter in life, when it becomes practical, when from the lofty region in which is soars, it comes to confront positive reality, then it must necessarily become moderated. But without that all the infinite space of nature would not be sufficient for it. Flaring up above all realities, it is always going to flare up: no reason for it to stop ever.

However, one must admit, there is prodigious happiness in these endless voyages of the soul. And I believe that it is only by this forgetting, by this negligence of the real that pure thought can acquire all the *élan* of which it is capable and achieve as a final result the most lofty knowledge that it is given to achieve in the portion of its life that it is forced to pass here below.

The Verb! Then what is the Verb? See the pilot maneuvering a boat amid the rocks, turning it and returning it, as he would a piece of wood floating on the water: there are some words that he prefers from moment to moment which make that. That is the Verb. See on the battlefield a hundred battalions set in motion at once and falling on the enemy: it is a sign, a gesture of the general which has made that. There again is the Verb. Think about this otherwise powerful word which, more distinctly than any human voice is able to make itself heard in limited space, resounding in all the infinity of nature. And that there is the perfect Verb. Thus, the Verb is the acting word, the creating word.

One imagines that the Biblical prophecies are only simple predictions, announcements concerning the future, nothing more. A grave error. They are

teachings, teaching relating to all times; essential parts of the doctrine as much as the rest.

When the Holy Spirit spoke through the mouth of the prophets He did not remake human nature. For, man's heart is once made in such a way that it can presage the future only by deduction from the present and from a given past. Unless the human heart were to cease being what it is, a reasonable nature acting by its own power, the human heart could not do otherwise. Thus it is this rigorous liaison of the future with the past and the present, hidden from the majority of men which was given to the seers of Israel to perceive clearly, more clearly I would say than to the rest of mankind. And as this liaison was constant, necessary, absolute, it is naturally the same today, even tomorrow, even always. Circumstances, perfectly similar situations lead at all times to perfectly similar results. Thus, the prophet's lesson is meant for all time and for all places, provided one knows how to apply it suitably.

Undoubtedly this rigorous resemblance of epochs is not an easy thing to grasp. A profound feeling, an intimate awareness of the ways of God, coming from an infinite submisssion to the manifestations of his will can alone unveil it. The same superior principle that causes the *gift* of prophecy also gives the intelligence of the prophecy. The prophet and his interpreter are placed on the same line in the intellectual heirarchy. He is a prophet who understands perfectly the prophet.[55]

For example, people have wished to trace the lofty predictions of the Apocalypse to the epochs of particular times: simpleminded foolishness. The thought of the Apocalypse is only an immense lesson, absolutely being applied to each moment of infinite duration and to that which one sees every day happening around oneself. These frightening voices reverberate from there, one hears them every day. These horrible monsters which are shown there to us, one sees them every day. This cracking of the world's machine which is made there, we are perpetually witnesses of it. In a word, everyday drama, eternal for the world, there that is the superb poem of St. John.[56] And, the dénouement of this drama, not as in those products of our imagination, but according to the law of the infinite, is perpetual and begins from the opening of the scene.

The dreamers who have interpreted the Apocalypse had an obligatory mission. All the foolishness to which the sacred book gave place, have never been vain, there was a reason for everything. For example, the millenarians were absolutely necessary; without millenarians, no crusades. But, crusades of all sorts have been indispensable. First, the new society could not be formed without them. Then, without this religious prodigy, the example of the greatest possible exaltation of religious feeling would have been lacking to the human spirit and of this great mover of things here below one could not have had the true measure. Finally, an immense indispensable memorable event, all full of instruction and of singularly fruitful thought without it would not have been handed down to future generations.[57]

"Sensible man", you say, "but like everyone he runs after happiness: that is why he agitates the way he does". For happiness, let's see what is needed before all else? Must it not be to be content with oneself and everything in the world. I ask you, can that be so for anyone who is not an imbecile? Excellent means, I find, to dissuade certain people of the ardent desire for happiness by demonstrating to them that drunkards can be happy.

It is certain that happiness, that which the majority of men desire, is an impossible thing without a stupid contentment with oneself and with everything. To achieve this happiness one seeks riches, honor, glory. But once having obtained all that, must one not be the most wise and most perfect of men and to have nothing more to say about all that which happens around you? Otherwise, what good is it? The way to be happy without that? No matter how one imagines felicity down here, one must always suppose at the end of this felicity a foolish satisfaction in oneself, still even more foolish indifference towards all that surrounds us. The ancients knew that very well. More frank, more naïve than we, they had no other morality than that. What is their sage? An arrogant drunkard, ravished with himself, insensitive to all that which is going on before him. In that there is no difference between Epicurus[58] and Zeno.[59] Such is the most perfect ideal that man could make himself from supreme wisdom. What an interval between this apathetic, immobile, disenchanted philosophy and this other which says to us: *Seek ye first the kingdom of heaven and all things will be given unto you!*[60] And nevertheless what is simpler than the lesson contained in this beautiful word of the Saviour? Don't seek, it says to you, good for yourself, seek it for others and it will come unerringly to you youself without you even thinking about it: as for your particular happiness, does it not lie in general happiness?

No personality, no egoism. That is what kills happiness. To live for others is to live for oneself. Good will, infinite love for one's fellow man right there, I believe, is true felicity: there is no other.

Would not every material movement be, by change, the product of the sonorous and harmonic vibration of the aerial fluid or of some other similar fluid, even more subtle, more ethereal which would penetrate into the most solid compact things and would directly act on the elementary molecules which compose them?

For us sound is something which affects our auditive organ. But why could it not be by the effect of its harmonic action, principle or cause of the infinity of mutations and transportations in matter, whose cause and principles we do not know today?

Vibration of the air is that which is sound in reality. But, how can the air surrounding the body vibrate without affecting the body in any way whatsoever? The contrary, moreover, is proved.

It is certain that the air is in a state of perpetual agitation. As for some of the inexplicable phenomena of organic nature which take place in the interior of beings, such as the ascending movement of sap in vegetables, the circulation of

blood in animals, etc. which more or less contradict the known natural laws, notably that of universal gravity, could these phenomena be products of that continual movement of aerial nature? For example, I don't see how certain consonances could not have taken place by the sequence of this movement between medullar, fibral and other substances, finding themselves in certain harmonic relationships among themselves in a same being in or in different beings. And why these consonances would not then lead to a thousand effects which surprise us? If an undulation of air can unsettle an extended chord in accordance with another chord, then why, I ask you, the nerve would not be unsettled in the same way by a similar cause?

Undoubtedly nothing but questions still, but do you acknowledge, that if there were a response to these questions, what vast applications computation would have obtained one day and how much thenceforth the domain of mathematical certitude would be expanded?

If there is such a thing as an infinity of space, I don't know it, but I know that there is an infinity of time and that this infinity, this incommensurable duration, this succession of things without end, it is nothing but *life itself* or perfect existence.

And first of all the finite is multiple, the infinite not. The idea of multiplicity is mixed up in my mind with the idea of annihilation, the idea of unity with that of eternity. Thus annihilation is for me evil, eternity good. Evil tends only to destroy, good to make continue. Thus eternity, well, life - it is all the same thing.

I call that the two *terminal ideas* of the human spirit, given the fact that they are at the two ends of the line which give its measure. All other human ideas are contained in them or relating to those there in such a way that the spirit cannot conceive of anything except one or the other of these ideas; the idea of annihilation or that of duration are necessarily connected. Basis of all our judgments, and not only of all our judgments but even of all our feelings, this environment in which the entire movement of intelligence takes place forms the law or all our thought without us doubting it at all. Remark that even numerical ideas, however foreign they seem to be to these notions, are not exempt, since they are only ideas of division and of addition: to divide is to annihilate, to add is to produce.

Especially moral thought, in my opinion, could not have any other principle than that one there. All ideas of perfection, beauty, harmony, virtue, and love are only modifications of the idea of duration. All ideas of imperfection, ugliness, discord, vice and hatred are only modifications of the idea of annihilation. We could not imagine anything either of goodness or of beauty unless we attribute to them at the same time durability, continuity, persistance. We could not imagine anything evil or ugly unless we attached the idea of precariousness, cessation, annihilation. Thus our mind is constantly between the thought of life and that of death, and it is really only governed by these two thoughts.

One must observe that the feeling of our own preservation does not enter at all in these elementary notions of reason. The principle of our preservation is only that of animal nature, completely different from the moral principle. But one must reunite them in order to produce the complete life: it is exactly that which Christian philosophy does in offering to the human spirit the idea of eternal salvation as being the idea of the absolute good.

I ask: when one will have explained the historical phenomenon of the establishment of Christianity in the most natural way possible, for example, by a sort of development of the system of Moses produced by its mixing with oriental philosophy and that of Greece. . .what would one have thereby proved against the fact of revelation? Where has one seen that the Saviour has said that the Father was discovered by Him in an extraordinary and instantaneous revelation, as He Himself was later revealed, for example, to Saint Paul? Thus don't we know that He listened and questioned the doctors? And again, that the little child grew and was fortified in spirit?[61]

There is historical truth based on fact, there is historical truth based on reason. There is analysis in history but there is also synthesis: I would almost say that there is in history the *apriori* as well as the *aposteriori.*

Certainly what history recounts is not what conveys more of its truth; it is what history thinks, what it imagines, what it invents. In this sense, there are such poetic conceptions in history which are perhaps truer than such and such a scrupulous narration, just as pure reflection is often truer than experience. The chain of facts can only be imagined; it is not to be found in the chronicle. Deductions of simple reason serve no purpose there, for, strictly speaking, they cannot take hold of the past, the proper domain of imagination and of poetry. Moreover, the eyewitness very often does not see the thing such as it is, perhaps never. And it happens that after many centuries have gone by, the profound thinker imagines the fact more correctly then the contemporary who touched it with his own fingers. For that, what will the thinker have to do? He will have to set out from a principle. There is the invention and also the loftiest historical truth. One can say that this truth is not properly in history itself, but that it is communicated to history by thought. Such is the truth which one finds in Niebuhr,[62] Guizot,[63] etc.

When one has related much, it is time for conjecture. Then the mass of events, the chaos of facts, disappears, reasoning comes; in place of the recitation you have an argument, a syllogism, and finally the moral law of the times.

The history of our country, for example, has still not been related enough, however, that does not mean that one cannot conjecture about it. A stronger, more prophetic thinking than that of Karamzin[64] will do it one day. The Russian people will then know what it is and especially what it is not. At this hour the Russian people take themselves to be a people like any other; I have the belief that it will then be frightened by its moral nothingness. It will learn that providence only had it live, in order to have a certain dynamic power in the

world and not in order to have it figure intellectually in the world. Then we will know that we have only weighed down on the earth and not yet acted on it.

Just as the nations which formed the new society were at first called on the scene only as material powers and did not take their places in the intellectual order until they submitted to the yoke of its law, we too, at this hour, are still only a physical force; we will become a moral force only when we shall have done the same as they. But when?

The disbeliever resembles not badly, I find, a very clumsy juggler who with one foot holds onto the rope and clumsily holds onto his equilibrium with the other. But the bad juggler of the stage makes his *tours de force* pay, as for this other bad juggler, what does he get for his pain? As far as I know nothing but fatigue. When one sees him balancing thus on his rope, one is afraid for him, one would like to lend him a hand and say to him "Get down now, my friend, you are going to break your neck."

"Many are the poets that have never penn'd,"[65] said Byron. But no matter what he says about it, thought alone does not make the poet, he still must know how to recite. It is a fact that poetic thinking is not complete so long as it has not been clothed in words. Poetic inspiration, in my opinion, is as much that of the words as that of the idea. Thought in silence is a thought without body, but poetry is all body, even today when it does nothing but reason. One is never a poet in prose. All the great prose writers whom one treats like poets, Fénelon, Buffon, Rousseau did not possess, according to me, absolutely anything of poetic power. The material element of this power is its integral element. I want the poet to shake my nerves as well as my soul.

Poetry is given to reunite the physical world to the intellectual world, and to fool the mind by this confusion. Music has the same mission and it is proceeded by poetry, but music all by itself could not be sufficient to produce this effect: the mind would resist it. But, it was urgent that the mind should have been fooled: consequently it has fallen to poetry to do it.

One does well to base speculation upon the principle of contradiction: it is undoubtedly a great law, but in relationship to God this principle is no more viable than any other principle of confined human reason. What exactly makes up God's being is that all contradiction disappears in his All-Powerfulness and that all that is impossible for us becomes possible in Him.

When reason tries to know God all by itself, it makes a God with its own hands; it does not attempt to conceive of God as *He is*. That is why, had God not revealed Himself, there would have never been a God on earth except the God made by human hands.

But it is said: hence He made Himself completely visible to man? Not at all. He only showed to man as much as He had to, so that man could seek Him in this life and find Him in the other; that's all.

What are angels? Intellects superior to the human intellect, natures inaccessible to our organs. Why should it not be so? Here is not, I find, a case of doubt but a case of ignorance.

Genesis does not speak about the creation of angels. The point is that Genesis does not deal with everything but only with human things. And that is, in my opinion, one of the characteristics which distinguished it best from all the known cosmologies; there is one of the great proofs, I find, concerning the origin attributed to Genesis. Genesis only says exactly that which must be said. Does that not remind one of the physical principle of *the least action*? Angels are not missing from the rest of the Bible; the language of the times. God could only speak to man in man's language. Let us not be surprised that He would wish to be heard by man, when He deigns to address words to man. But that should not be the basis for the belief in angels. Otherwise each word of the Sacred Book would be dogma.

Hence is the doctrine of angels an article of faith? Assuredly not. Even more, can man, made in the image of God, legitimately recognize natures superior to himself? I doubt it. Jesus was not an angel, but He was God and man at the same time. Thus it is permissible to doubt, I believe, that the interval between the intelligent nature of man and that of God be filled by an intermediate nature. What is very true is that at all times multitudes, as well as the most profound minds, were inclined to admit natures more perfect than our own natures. It is quite possible not to attach importance to this belief, but it would be an even more gross superstition to reject it as a gross superstition, I find.

Swedenborg[66] was a man of great profundity. Only he was wrong to form an esoteric doctrine which has only served to diminish the effect which his works would have produced without that. But as for his familiarity with celestial powers, there's nothing to be surprised about in that. I would have been very much more surprised if, given a mind made the way his was, he would not have been as familiar with the celestial powers as he was.

You have often heard say that sleep is the figure of death: it is not that at all. As for me, I find that it is rather sleep which is a real death, and, that which is called death, perhaps there is life there. In sleep there is an interruption of the *me*, after death that does not happen, for if there were not persistance of the *me* there would be annihilation. From the tomb one no longer returns, but one returns from sleep and one takes up the *me* again. But, say, does one live, when one has no doubts that one lives, even if it were only a sole instant?

The fact is that true death is essential in life. Dead we are, perfectly dead a portion of our lives, not hyperbolically, not figuratively, but literally, seriously dead. A thousand times a day a reflective return back to ourselves will let you see that the moment before you were not living, no more than before being born. You had no awareness of that which you did, not only the feeling of your existence. And then, hence where was life? The life of a tree, of a living thing more or less, not even the life of an animated being, and assuredly not life of an intelligent being.

Life ceaselessly escapes us, then one finds it again, so much nearly that we might live perpetually. Intelligent life is interrupted each time that awareness is lost.

The more there are of these moments, the less there is of intellectual life. And if there are only those moments there, that is, well, death. To die in this way no need to forsake this life and very certainly as for another death, there is none. Death in life is hence all the death there is.[67]

However, listen to us. When I say awareness I do not thereby understand the ideological awareness upon which modern philosophy is based, a simple feeling of our existence. I mean this other awareness which lets us not only feel ourselves living but that we know even how we live. It is the power given to us to act, in each moment of duration, upon the following moment, to make our life ourselves instead of letting it flow as the brute does. Should this awareness there ever become entirely lost, that is what kills irrevocably. And do you know why? That there is the perfect damnation. Can the intelligent being draw upon itself any greater pain than that of nothingness?

What the pagans called wisdom, virtue, sovereign good, we call all that heaven.

I do not know where bad thoughts come to me from, only the madman thinks he knows where good thoughts come from.

Christian charity: reason stripped of the faculty of relating to itself.

The well-made mind gravitates towards a belief, towards a submission just as naturally as the badly-made mind pushes away all belief, resists against all submission.[68]

The philosopher makes of God, a law, a harmony, a universal and I don't know what all else. Then he says, "the divinity could not be conceived of, I surely believe. How will I conceive of this incoherent God, multiple in infinity, intelligence and matter at the same time?" But that there is not the God *who is*, it is the God that you have made. In place of the most simple idea of all, you have put the most complex idea possible. It is a great marvel truly that you would not know how to make it enter into your mind.

We only know a little tip of our being, that which we find in our present life. We well know that it continues strongly after that, and yet, an unheard-of thing: we wish to know the law of our entire being.

The pantheist calls the world the *all*. He supposes it to be perfect. He finds cause and principle of everything in everything. This everything is eternal, infinite, intelligent; he embraces all time, all space. Finally all the attributes which the Deist finds in God, the pantheist finds in his all.

And at the right moment. A perfectly consequential system which can be rigorously demonstrated. Once the word all is pronounced, the rest is only a necessary corollary of the principle thus posed.

But all that evidently is reducible to one word substituted for the other. Thus Spinoza could very well be strongly religious, and he was without any doubt. In reading him one senses, in effect, how he is carried along despite himself by means of some extraordinarily devout thing, something which pierces through the mathematical arrogance of his argument and makes all the more impression, since one anticipated it the least.

Yet as for pantheism, it is basically a very exaggerated admiration of nature. Forced to see intelligence everywhere, pantheists envision intelligence for everything and all the universe is found in this way to be one great intelligence. Look at Bonnet,[69] Paley[70] and the others.

Animal instinct and human instinct are two completely different things. The first is a physical or sensitive impulse; the other a confused perception of reason which only becomes confused with sensation, because reason is confused but is in effect well distinct from it.

Man does not possess his instinct in the way beasts do. That would exclude reason. But he possesses it in the way which is proper to him. In man instinct all alone determines nothing. It only acts in him by combining with his reason whose energy he sometimes augments and sometimes weakens. In animals instinct is the unique principle of all their activity; that is why its power is so strong in them and why in certain cases it seems to go beyond the power of man's very reason.

What to do to see clearly? Don't look around oneself.

What is Christianity? Science of life and of death.

What is the social order? Temporary remedy for a temporary evil.

What do legislative, political, judiciary institutions and all combinations of this nature do? They correct the evil which they have made.

What have the barbarians, the destroyers of the ancient world become? Christians.

What would have become of the world if Jesus Christ had not been born? Nothingness.

Did no one ever come to dream that two and two make five? No. Then why say that in sleeping one does not have the use of one's reason?

In France what does one do with thinking? One says it. What does one do with it in England? One practices it. What does one do with it in Germany? One digests it. What does one do with thinking in our country? Nothing at all, and do you know why?

Men consider themselves to be in society when they are reunited in cities or in other enclosures. One would say that they have only to press themselves together and to park themselves like sheep in order to be in society.

Five years ago in Florence I met a man whom I liked very much.[71] I passed only a few hours with him, only a few hours but truly very sweet and very good ones. And yet I did not know how to extract from this man every part that he had to extract from me. He was a English Methodist, established, I believe, in a mission in the south of France, but when I made his acquaintance, he was returning from the Holy Land. In him was a singular mix of warmth, grace, vivacity for the great object of his preoccupation, namely religion, and a singular mix of indifference, coldness and tranquility for all the rest. In the Italian galleries, the masterpieces of art did not move him at all, but the little sarcophaguses of the first centuries of the Church occupied him in a singular fashion. He considered them and meditated over them with exaltation. He saw

there something or other saintly, touching and profoundly instructive, and he was absorbed in the reflections which they suscitated in him. Hence I only passed a few hours with this man, a very short time, a moment, since then no news from him. Well, there is the man in whom I am at this very hour the most in society. Not a day passes that his memory returns to me, and always with it an emotion, a thought amid the so great pains which rain on me, amid my numerous discouragements, and that bolsters me up. There is the true society of intelligent beings. There is how two souls really act on one another: space and time can have nothing to do with it.

One hears say sometimes about an old man that he has reverted to childhood, the poor man! Oh no, the fact is that he still has not emerged from childhood. Look at his life: always a child, more a child than at this hour, he is that which he always has been.

Fortunate would be the man who could retrace his steps. That is not, however, the established order; he must always advance, and he always does advance, not even one step backwards, always in front of himself, and on his head he gathers up guilt upon guilt. But then when death has passed over him, yes, then divine pity, one must hope, will allow him to stop a moment, to revise past times, perhaps even to revert a little.

However, as you know, there is a Christian demonination which it does not want to have anything to do with Purgatory; it wants us to jump with both feet from this life into this other, where all is irrevocable, irremissable, irreparable. A cruel doctrine, more cruel than false.

If you wish to become acquainted with what the animal soul is, I beg your pardon, but see what happens in you part of the day; you will learn something from it. Pay attention to the fact that the most intelligent animal proves absolutely nothing. For example, if one sees it hesitate sometimes before becoming determined to act as if it were reflecting, that is because the complete extent of its sensation is not known and how far the sensation can continue in beings which only have it as a guide. In animals there is a very sensitive almost mechanical imitation which, if one understands it, would explain well all that is going on in them and leave no difficulty at all about this subject. As for us ourselves, we mechanically imitate a thousand things without the least bit of reflection: without doubting at all the habits of the people with whom we live, we contrast their allures, we imitate their gestures and even the sound of their voices. That is our purely animal nature.

As for this weak element of perfectibility which one finds in beasts, there is no need to revert back to sensation; the organic principle alone suffices to make it reasonable. Don't plants have their habits? One could give them new ones, if one better understood their structure better, and that would become the education of plants. Then there would be progress there, as in beasts.

Buffon[72] and other naturalists have said almost the same thing. But it is necessary to depend upon the consideration which the experience of our own

nature furnishes. For, there is nothing so important to realize as that we are not men all day long, one must admit.

If I remember correctly, Buffon after having lifted every piece of intelligence from animals, attributes to them a sort of awareness of their being. A singular idea! As for myself then, do I constantly have this awareness? And more, don't I have to make a certain effort to give myself the awareness? Hence could the animal have something that I myself don't have at this hour? Foolishness.

Repeat unceasingly: How can we be miserable? Are we not made in the image of God?

Yes, all is reflected in consciousness. No law in nature which is not found repeated in the *me*. All phenomena of the physical world are reproduced in the intellectual world. Thought recapitulates all the movement of nature in its interior. But it knows and nature does not know. The life of thought is knowledge; the life of nature is passive movement. When thought has ceased to know, it has ceased to be. That is why the Savior said: *eternal life is to know you, my Father.*[73]

Throughout all of his life man can believe in the annihilation of his being; never has he believed it, never will he believe it at the instant before his death. At that very moment when he feels himself dissolving, he feels himself enduring. There, I believe, is the great principle of the universal persistence of beings, expressed to the n^{th} degree this time in the me.

There is a plastic force in nature which only makes forms. Probably there is the true vital principle, resumé of all natural forces. Nowhere does it manifest itself in a more instructive manner than in crystalization; there must one study it and meditate on it. This crystalization is, in effect, a singular phenomenon. Nothing but geometry. And pay close attention; nature procedes in this way in the formation of the primary matter of bodies: an immense subject for reflection.

Also, a force which responds to that, exists in the intelligence, namely imagination. Would not these two forces of universal nature be those which hold most of the creative power and which would imitate it the best? Very possibly.

In achieving one's salvation what must one do? It is life which one gives to his soul: a wholly divine work. Hence the one who has given life to innumerable multitudes of souls, the one who does not cease giving it perpetually, the one who will do nothing but always disseminate up to the end of the centuries, sowing life everywhere - I ask you, is he a god or not?

What is reason? Concerning reason, I only know my reason for me; but, I do not call that one reason. I call it nothingness: say, am I not the master of it?

Do you believe[74] that man would naturally understand death better than birth? Certainly not.

Around him he sees beings being formed and being dissolved and among other beings similar to him: he does not know whether they lived under another form, before they has assumed their current form; he does not know if they will live when they will have lost it, however, he believes that he understands

something about death, because he fears it. It is not the pain which makes him afraid, for he does not know whether there is pain. It is also not the annihilation, for, after all, what is then so frightening about ceasing to be? Hence it follows that he has learned in some way or other that after death he will still live. But he does not know what this other life will be like, and what it is to live in this new life, in a way different from the current way of living, which seems to him to be terrifying. Hence there we have only one of these great traditions whose origin is lost in unknown times, like so many other fundamental ideas of this human spirit, which the human spirit did not give itself at all, but which must have been communicated then when intelligence was created in the universe.

But finally what is death? Nothing but the moment in the total duration of man when he ceases to perceive himself in his body, nothing but that.

Immortality of the soul and its immateriality cannot be rigorously demonstrated. But that which can perhaps be demonstrated in its existence after the instant which we call death. One has need of no more than that for universal morality.

The Christian passes unceasingly from earth into heaven and from heaven onto earth and ends by installing himself in heaven.

There are more legitimate beliefs than there are doubts. There that is what this sublime word from St. Paul signifies: *charity belives everything*.[75]

No one claims to obtain anything unless he at least makes the effort to extend his hand in order to seize it. There is only one thing that one must exempt from that; it is happiness. As for happiness, one finds very simply that one possesses it without having done anything to acquire it, or, I would say, to merit it.

The only way to believe in God is to hope in Him. That is why he who does not pray, does not believe.

Christian immortality[76] is life with the least amount of death, and not, as has been imagined, a life after death.

You venerated and you loved this man who has just died. At this hour he is for you only a sad memory, sad and perhaps sweet at the same time. But you no longer love him, you no longer venerate him, you only make yourself recall him.

And, in effect, how to love and to venerate a piece of dust? But if, by chance, this man still lived, I don't know where, but in some faraway region, in some unknown land? If he were only absent, nothing but absent, as so many other of your friends? In that case why would you not bear him at present the same feelings which you bore him at other times? I don't see any reason at all for it. And there is the cult of saints. To believe seriously in good faith in the immortality of the soul and not to venerate the men who merit our veneration, because they no longer live here on earth - is that not absurd?

Do you recall what happened to you during the first year of your life? No, you say. Very well, what is strange then about your not remembering either what happened before your birth?

We are enjoined to love our neighbor, but why? In order to love a thing other than ourselves. It has nothing at all to do with morality, it's very simply logical. I try vainly, but I always find something which interposes itself between the truth and me. That thing is myself. Truth is hidden from me only by myself. Hence there is only one way of discovering it, by setting aside the me. One would do well, I find, to repeat often to oneself what Diogenes, as you know, once said to Alexander: "Stand back, my friend, you are blocking me from my sun."[77]

It is only the eye of charity which sees clearly. There is the entire philosophy of Christianity.

What do men do in living together? Nitrogen: they kill each other off.

Do you conceive of the generation of truth in you? No. And that of the lie? Certainly.

All my being revolts at the idea of attributing some incapacity or other to God. One does that every time when one imagines eternal laws, either immutable order or pre-established harmony, either eternal matter, monads, elements or every other similar thing. One always supposes that God is incapable of destroying that, whether one says it or not.

As is known, Descartes[78] could not support the idea of limiting divine power. As for me, I can't doubt it. It is the horror which I always had of this idea which has been the star of my life.

No matter what definition one makes for organic being you will find that it can be perfectly applied to the terrestial globe. Nature has been divided into organic and inorganic. But, as the celestial bodies cannot belong to one or the other of these two divisions, one has devised mathematical points of a new sort because of the immensity of space in which they move. As for the planet which we inhabit, knowing only the epidermis, one makes from this epidermis matter a vast science. Very well, what have you to refute that? Isn't empiricism perfectly satisfied with this arrangement? What else do you need?

You others, who give no credence to Christianity, think yourselves to be very strong. Then know especially that as for that force which you vaunt, given the day on which Christianity is offered to you, it is no longer a matter of whether to become Christian or not become Christian. It is prejudice and superstition which causes the fear in you; very well, it is in lack of belief that prejudice and superstition are to be found, not at all in faith. Say, how have you become what you are? Is it not the same as someone becoming Christian? Do you do anything but repeat, as people do, your cathecism without understanding it? Then do you believe that you made up what you spout out with such confidence? Poor people! Look a little; is it not the parish priest who taught it to you?

When the *philosophe* pronounces the word man, does he always know just what he wants to say? I don't think so. Man comes into the world like other animals; he differs from them only by an organization which is particular to him and which makes him a unique type in the animal kingdom. Of course, this is not the case of the intelligent man, i.e., the instructed man: a separated being which has no place in nature. When one composes treatises on human understanding, one seeks to discover how the human animal came to be an intelligent being. Precisely there is the error and confusion. The animal human becomes the intelligent man, yes, but *he does not become it necessarily, but fortuitously.*

There is the hypothesis concerning the animal human, and I say hypothesis, because such a man has never been seen, given the fact that man, borne amid his similar beings, could not remain in his native state for an instant. Hence this hypothesis is very good in pathology and in philosophic hygiene. But what do your think that philosophy properly speaking can make out of it? When philosophy occupies itself with it, from a human philosophy it becomes animal philosophy. And it is then only that part of natural history which deals with animal customs that forms the human chapter in zoology.

Infinite spirit, when it dons the form of finite spirit, when it realizes itself in man, should naturally preserve in its new mode of existence, the conditions of its previous existence - it should *know* before all else. Thus, man does not emanate from the two-footed animal, as the materialists imagine, but from a naïve almost incomplete feeling of his nature. Hence human intelligence is never found to be in absolute ignorance of everything; a more or less clear notion of the law of its being appeared to man the very day when human intelligence knew that it existed. Otherwise, human intelligence would not have contained the principle of its existence; it would not have been *spirit.* But it is also certain that, in the course of time, the individual spirit, by the very reason of its free nature, must be isolated, detached from universal intelligence, and become subjective, and from that point on, absolute ignorance becomes possible at the same time as the return of the individual being to the general being and the reconstruction of the fallen *me* became inevitable. That is what Christianity proposes in the logical order and what it realizes in so far as a revolution of this nature could happen it without breaking the equilibrium among the different forces which move the moral world, without basically ruining all the laws of creation. The day when the human holocaust was consummated on Calvary, the universal spirit found itself again manifested in the individual spirit, and this time it took up residence for all time. Since then man found himself *virtually* in possession of the absolute good and true. Evil had a boundary which it no longer dared to violate and the good had none. The profound shadow which the immense human personality projected not long ago on all objects of its vision, no longer existed and henceforth he tended only to live in the reality.

But there were some phases that humanity had to pass through before arriving at this stage in which it found itself established now, when humanity still lived at the heart of its primitive nature or when it already gave itself an

impulse of its own or finally when its march was spontaneously determined by a direct manifestation of the unversal spirit, humanity never departed from the sphere of *knowledge*. Hence right there is the *milieu* in which the entire human factor takes place. Spirit is spirit, it cannot do anything but understand. From morning til night man only does that. Even his sensations in so far as he experiences them, are transformed into perceptions in his head. And this continual participation of his intelligent being in all that which happens in his physical being is precisely what constitutes his unity, that which makes of him something more than a pure intellect.

Thus, that man of genius who conceived of a *doctrine of science* certainly came up with a good idea. But one should be very on guard to remember that man does nothing but know and that it is perfectly true that there exists outside man something which is the object of his knowledge. Consequently, it is the relationship between knowledge and the object which one must establish, if one wishes to obtain the law of knowledge itself. That is what one did not do. One only occupied himself with the *subject*, i.e., with that which knows and one did not reach to the object, i.e., that which is known. By a natural consequence the system which came first after that had to concentrate with all its power upon the object of human knowledge and that is what in effect took place. But then the individual was swallowed up in nature in the *all*; it was pantheism with all its consequences. Thus a new reaction became necessary one time in which the *me*, while completely reclaiming its rights, had to accept the *accomplished synthetic fact* and place itself in front of the universe and of God in truth and in reality. There is the last chapter of modern philosophy.

One sees that in this system it will be the *spirit* which will be the supreme category in a manner of speaking or the definitive form of life. To attain that, being goes through many phases and also categories, which are much more important than the ideological categories of Kant. All these phases of humanity's general life are linked together and follow logically, and the human *me* is allowed only to catch the feeling more or less, since, in each given epoch, it seeks to render account of that which it experiences, of that which is happening around it. Humanity's progress would consist of approaching thus more or less the moment when the achievement of the complete feeling of what will then be contained in it, will be accorded to humanity. And, once having achieved that, humanity would find itself in the state of *absolute spirit,* i.e., of a spirit which knows itself and conceives of humanity perfectly, the last phase of human development.

We just saw what constituted the vice of the celebrated doctrine of the *me*, a doctrine which claimed to establish that there exists nothing except knowledge, which assumed that knowledge presupposes a known object, i.e., something that man did not create and which existed before he even had knowledge of it. But one could not deny that in its passing it left some profound traces in the human spirit. A principle of extreme fruitfulness was contained in this daring apotheosis of the individual. If Fichte did not see the object, it is assuredly not a fault of his philosophic mind, it is very simply because he was absorbed in a

passionate work which he was obliged to do in order to arrive at constructing the *internal fact*. But, Hegel[79] coming after him and having Schelling as master, was to be led to constitute the *external fact*, and that is a task which he fulfilled admirably. It remains to know if in his turn Hegel did not allow himself to be invaded too much by *the object*, if, in his work of general reconcilation, he assumed the role of the individual? An impartial examination of his system, seen from this point of view, would give us the most exact evaluation of it. In any case, his philosophy, as it was essentially synthetic, could not remain on target; in the same way that Fichte had to fall back upon analysis despite himself, and despite the powerful impulse that Schelling came to impress upon the philosophical world. That Hegel prodigiously advanced the synthesis of the human spirit is certain, but we shall be allowed to add that he did not completely elaborate his thought. Passed away too early in the midst of his career, Hegel had not the time to state his final word, to put the finishing touches on his work. Yet, here are some lines from Hegel himself which will state better than we can, the tendency of his system: "The human spirit" he says, "knew well how to make the analysis of certain things, but it has not yet learned how to make the synthesis. For example, it has separated the soul from the body in man, and that was very good, for those are two different things. The human spirit has also separated God from nature, and that also was very good, for God is spirit and the world only matter. But having done that, the human spirit forgot the magic word which was supposed to reunite these things again, a little like Goethe's sorcerer's apprentice,[80] who, after having inundated his master's house, did not know how to get the water out of it and going to drown when very fortunately for him the master arrived and saved him." One can guess who is the master sorcerer in philosophy.

Do you think that it be nothing at all to transport a meditative spirit to its own sphere, to impose upon it the paltry world in which the common man works? Around you you have a crowd of men, or fractions of men, who are not destined to leave a trace of their passage. Why don't you go preach your sublime doctrines to them? But let the serious man, obeying his own principle, pass by. Don't detour him from the road which he follows, despite himself, the road from which he could not deviate without breaking himself, without dragging you along with him perhaps in his fall. Hence don't you see that the orbit which he travels in has been traced in advance? To bar him the way is to attack the laws of nature. Do you think that it is an innocent joke to cast stones on the road of the man of thought so that he stumbles, so that he falls full length on the pavement and gets up only all soiled, his face all bruised, his clothes in tatters? Undoubtedly you could not comprehend this man. Crippled, mutilated, tired of the nothingness surrounding him, a mystery for himself, for you even more so, how to figure out in effect that which was hidden at the basis of this compromised soul! What you and yours have driven back in this poor heart, what the world and things, in which he moves along panting, crushed with germs, with power in this poor head! Not recognized by the world, he does not

recognize the world. He had the naïveté to believe that he would be assisted, that the idea promulgated by him would be grasped, that his sacrifices which his martyrs would not pass unobserved, that one of you would gather up what he scattered with such *largesse*. Undoubtedly foolishness! But was it up to you to lay traps for him, to play the role of *agent provocateur* with him? Was it your job, you who yourself have called him powerful in word and in heart? If that was not a bitter derision, then how did you have the courage to gag his mouth and put him in chains? And who knows what would have happened if you had not crossed his path? Perhaps a torrent cleansing the filth in which you are interred? Perhaps a sword cutting the shackles which are binding you?

From the day when we pronounced the word of West in relationship to ourselves we were lost.

It is not the Turks who destroyed the eastern empire, it is the western people who let Constantinople be taken by Mehmed and who had already taken it in passing once themselves.[81]

How does it happen that in a book on Christianity, generally acknowledged as a good book in which all the religions and all the philosophies in the world are discussed, there is not a word about the Orthodox Church, if only to refute its doctrines?[82]

Christianity exists; it exists not only as religion, but also as science, as religious philosophy, it has been accepted not only by ignorant populations but also by the most enlightened, the most profound minds: that is something which the most implacable enemies cannot deny. Hence they must prove one of three things: either that as Jesus Christ never existed, the religion which carries his name had been made by some adroit jugglers, or that, as Jesus Christ existed, he was himself only a juggler, or finally that he was an exalted fanatic, convinced of the things he was declaiming, in the same way as his divine origin. Having admitted one of these three things, it would remain to explain how Christianity, orginating from a lie, could have arrived at the state in which we find it today and produce the results which it has produced.

Socialism will triumph not because it is right but because those who fight it are wrong.

That which proves, among other things, that it is our Church which made us such as we are, is the fact that at present it is still a religious question which is the great concern of the country, that of the dissidents, the *raskolniki* [religious schismatics].

On the one hand, the unruly movement of society in Europe moving towards its unknown destiny, the entire western soil trembling and falling under the feet of the innovating genius; on the other hand, the majestic immobility of our country and the perfect repose of its people contemplating with a tranquil and serene eye the immense tempest which pounds at our doors. Such is the imposing spectacle of our day which the two spheres of human society offer us, a spectacle all full of lessons and which one could not admire enough...*ten pages in the same tone.*[83]

This man would be bearable if he decided not to know something, but no, he must know everything, everything. However, there is one very simple thing which he is perfectly ignorant of and that is that if one unfortunately finds oneself encumbered with the exterior of a hippopotamus, a man of genius must be modest.

Another one has a mind turned in the same way, but that one at least remains wisely at home in the sanctimonious and solitary contemplation of his own merits and those of his child. He does not come to hang on your neck to inform you that he knows every thing better than you.

The entire philosophy of Hegel, as is known, is contained in the two notions of *existence* and of *spirit*. Certainly there is nothing to reproach him in that. After all, what does one find in the world of thought and of free will other than the principle of action and its product? Nothing at all. Unfortunately the intermediate space between these two capital notions is filled by an undoubtedly rigorous dialectic, or if you will, a too rigorous a dialectic, but one which often degenerates into a veritable nominalism, into a narrow war of words possible only in an idiom in which each substantive becomes an infinitive to your taste. A particular grammar which expresses cause and effect with the same word and destroys causality by a fault of language. The role which Hegel has assigned to the dialectic is evidently too vast. Evidently he misunderstood his century, this century so preoccupied with the practical ideas, so pressed to attain results, to arrive at a *reality* to utilize an expression borrowed from Hegel himself. How, I ask you, can you expect us to tire ourselves out in this interminable discussion, in this scholasticism resuscitated from the Middle Ages, swept along as we are on our railroads with the rapidity of the sun's rays towards the conclusion of all things? Impossible.

It is known that the acquisition of one thing or other operates in two ways either by production or by exchange, or the opposite: to acquire something one must either make it or buy it. If you are ignorant of the process of producing the thing or if you don't have the means to produce it, or if you don't have the equivalent to offer in exchange, well, if you have credit, you could still obtain it. The current owner of the object will cede the property to you willingly based on the belief in an equivalency to come. But, it must be noted, nothing stimulates the thirst for joy as much as the ability to obtain the possession of things by means of this latter route. Nothing makes you dispense of your future with such great ease; nothing increases so much the extent of your life and offers such vast resources for your material existence in the present-day by anticipating the material existence of a tomorrow. But, in the intellectual order when the acquisition of ideas and of knowledge is only obtained by the work of the mind and by study, when consequently simple exchange cannot take place, when one cannot obtain one idea for another, there it happens that one gives credit to oneself, that one consumes things before even possessing them and that one sets in motion certain ideas without understanding them. Nothing is more common in our day. It is this same thirst for joy, seeking to satisfy itself in another

sphere. One can see that the theory of credit applied to the intellectual order is singularly appropriate.

The diffusion of enlightenment has caused all the classes to be permeated with new needs which yearn to be satisfied. That is really the actual situation. There it is - nothing more, nothing less. It is up to you to teach us whether the factual situation is legitimate or not. The worker wishes to have the leisure time to read a new book as you do, to see a new play as you do, to speak sometimes with his friends as you do. Undoubtedly he is wrong, but then why are you so preoccupied with disseminating enlightenment, in organizing primary instruction, in rendering science accessible to every one? You should have left the masses in their brutish state. The means which the classes, who have been disinherited from the goods of the earth, use to conquer are undoubtedly detestable, but do you believe that the means which feudal lords used to enrich themselves were any better? You must teach them other more legitimate, more efficacious means, which unsettle your habits of *comfort* and *far niente* less, but you must not insult them. The insult is not a treatise on political economy. The miserable who wishes for a little well-being, which you don't know how to arrange, is sometimes undoubtedly cruel, but never will he be as cruel as your fathers were, those who made you what you are, who gave you what you possess.

People speak a lot about the absence of security in which society finds itself. But since when did society enjoy any of this charming security which you regret losing so much? Did society enjoy it in the Middle Ages when each baron extorted the district which his castle dominated, when peasant uprisings desolated the countryside? Did society enjoy security in Italy when each city had its tyrant with his arsenal of torture instruments, or when there were the Huguenot wars, when Coligny[84] was assassinated and the king of France[85] fired on his own subjects? Did society enjoy security during the Thirty Years War when Germany smoked, burned by the bands of Wallenstein and Tilly,[86] or when the Palatinate was ravaged by order of Louvois[87] and when the dragoons caused the industrial populations of France to flee? Did society enjoy security when festoons of human cadavers decorated the white walls of the Kremlin,[88] or when under the regime of the imperial conscription the flower of the nation perished on the battle field? Finally, does society enjoy security today in the land where credit does not exist, where the normal rate of interest is ten per cent, where immense capital is at a standstill out of fear of being compromised, in which masters oppress their serfs when they are not oppressed by them, a country in which the state of siege is the permanent state of the country?

Once again, don't confuse two perfectly different factors which have no relationship to one another other than chronological order. Society is attacked, but it defends itself and, while defending itself, it is being instructed. Undoubtedly society will find a way to extricate itself from this situation. It is not as it was in former times a case of absurd and ridiculous prejudice debating

against general reason; it is now a serious interest which defends itself against a serious interest.

The philosophic me has nothing at all to so with that. Religious feeling, naïve belief, juvenile faith of the initial ages of Christianity are no longer possible and can no longer return for the masses. Henceforth they should only serve as consolation for some isolated beings, for some eternally primitive souls.

Divine wisdom never claimed to stop the world. It is divine wisdom itself which taught the human species the majority of the ideas which trouble it today. Divine wisdom could not and did not want to abolish the liberty of the human spirit. It placed in the human heart the germ of all the goods which man is permitted to enjoy, then it let humanity fend for itself. Would you dare to say that this germ perished in the present torment or that it became sterile by the storm's action on it? That would be a more guilty blasphemy than all the evil in the world caused by revolutions, for that would result in eliminating hope from the human spirit, that force which the Scriptures dared to make a virtue.

We march for the deliverance of the *rayah*[89] - to obtain *equality of rights* for them. Isn't that enough to make one laugh?

Maritime power - without coastline, without colonies, without a merchant marine - isn't that enough to make one laugh?

You talk to me about the persecution which you suffer - a domestic quarrel, that's all.

You call that a sublime ending, as for me I call that stupid complicity. An absence of generosity.

You claim to represent an *idea*; strive to have *ideas* - that would be better.

Law, and you know it, punishes complicity as well as crime.

[The following three short paragraphs are in Russian]

The Russian people are a singing not a talking people. One polyphonous Russian song contains more of Russian life than an entire pile of Russian chronicles.

Don't begin a war for the territorial integrity of Turkey; America alone is the competitor to be feared, in our age barbarism cannot overthrow enlightenment. It is not the control of Constantinople which might make Russia powerful. The Turks control Constantinople but look how miserable her condition is.

This is how the question must be posed. In the person of Peter the Great, Russia realized her criminal solitude and her flawed character. She became an apprentice to Europe. She has walked this new path until now. The recognition she received was rewarded by every kind of success and during the reign of Alexander I was crowned with the most exhalted triumphs ever seen in the history of mankind. But suddenly she decided that she could go it alone, that it was time to return to her previous solitude. Europe was at first amazed by such audacity, it looked her in the eye and seeing that she was indeed no longer humble, Europe became angry, and then the fun started.[90]

Letter to Alexander Pushkin, September 18, (1831)[1]

Well, my friend, what have you done with my manuscript?[2] Has it been infected with the cholera? But I hear that the cholera did not visit you. Perhaps the manuscript has taken flight? But if this so, please let me know at least something about it. I was very happy to see your handwriting again. It reminded me of a time which, if the truth be known, had not been worth much, but which still offered hope; the great disillusionments were yet to come. I refer to myself, as you of course understand; but you too, it seems to me, enjoyed then the advantage that all the realities had not yet been exhausted. Sweet and brilliant were these realities to you, my friend; nevertheless, were there among them any that can be compared to the false expectations, misleading forebodings and mendacious visions of the happy age of ignorance?

You say that you would like to talk: let's talk. But beware, I am not in a happy mood; and as for you, you are nervous. And what shall we talk about? You know that I have but one thought. If, by any chance I found other ideas in my brain, they would attach themselves to that one. I wonder if this satisfies you. And if you lent me some ideas from your world, if you evoked a response from me? But you wish that I should be the first to speak; so be it, but again I say, guard your nerves!

This is therefore what I have to say to you. Have you noticed that something extraordinary is happening at the center of the world of morality, something similar to what they say is happening at the center of the physical world? So tell me, I beg you, how has this affected you? As far as I'm concerned, it seems to me that this is ready material for poetry, this great revolution in the scheme of things;[3] you cannot remain indifferent to it, all the more since the selfishness of poetry will, I believe, find ample nourishment in it. How can one not be affected in one's most intimate feelings when set in the midst of this general clash of all of the elements in human nature! Recently I happened to see a letter written by your friend, the great poet;[4] the levity and ribaldry in it were frightening. Can you tell me how such a man, who at one time was filled with sadness for everything, fail to feel a single small twinge of sorrow at the death of an entire world? For consider, my friend; in truth, is it not an entire world that is perishing? What is taking place is nothing other than a terrible catastrophy, especially for one who has no advance knowledge of the new world which is to supercede it. Are you also left unaffected in your thoughts and emotions by this? I am certain that, unknown to you, this thought and this emotion are buried in the depths of your soul; it's just that they do not manifest themselves, they are in all probability hidden; they exist under that mass of old ideas, habits and conventions with which, whatever you might say, every poet is inevitably filled, whatever he does; for, my friend, from the Indian Valmiki, the singer of the Ramaiana and the Greek Orpheus, to the Scot Byron, every poet in his day has had to repeat the same thing, wherever in the world he sings.

Oh, how I should like to be able to evoke all the powers of your poetic being! How I should like to extract from it, even at this moment, all that I know lies hidden there, so that we could hear from you one of those songs that the epoch requires! And then, all that passes today before your eyes without leaving any trace on your mind would immediately strike you! Everything would take on a new appearance in your eyes!

But until this happens, let us talk. Quite recently, about a year ago, the world lived in perfect confidence about its present and future and studied in silence its past, learning from it. The intellect was being regenerated in peace, man's memory was being renewed, opinions were becoming reconciled to one another, passion was being repressed, anger was deprived of sustenance, vanity found satisfaction in good works; all human needs were gradually becoming confined to the realm of mental activity and all the interests of man were gradually being subsumed by the interest of the progress of the universal intelligence. For me this was an article of absolute faith, a source of boundless belief. In this felicitous calm of the world, in this future I found my own calm, my own future. And then the stupidity of a man, one of those men who are called, without their agreement, to rule the affairs of man, suddenly intervened . And the world, safety, future - all this became naught. Only think: it was not one of those great events that overturn kingdoms and bring death to peoples, but the absurd stupidity of one man[5] that was the cause of this! Living as you do in a whirlwind you could not have felt about this the same way as I did; which is quite understandable. But is it possible that you could see this unprecedented and terrible event bearing the clear stamp of Providence as merely mundane prose, or at best didactic poetry, like the earthquake of Lisbon, which could be of no interest to you? Impossible! As for me, tears fill my eyes when I see the vast calamity that has befallen that ancient, my ancient, society; this general catastrophe, which befell Europe in such an unforseen manner, has doubled my own unhappiness. And yet, I am quite certain that only good will come of this, and it is a source of solace for me to see that I am not the only one to retain hope that reason will revert to being reasonable. But how and when will this reversion take place? Will it be achieved by some powerful spirit sent by Providence on a unique mission, or will this be the result of a sequence of events brought about by Providence for the instruction of mankind? I do not know. But a vague feeling tells me that soon a man will come bearing the secret of time. Perhaps at first this will be something akin to the political religion currently preached by Saint-Simon in Paris, or to the new kind of Catholicism[6] with which a few bold priests are trying to replace the old faith, sanctified by time. And why not? Does it matter how the movement that will conclude the destinies of mankind will begin? Much of what had preceded the great moment long ago when the Good News was proclaimed by the Divine Herald was meant to prepare the universe; undoubtedly much will also take place in our own time with the same purpose before the new Good News will be brought to us from heaven. We shall await it. It is said that rumors of a general war are circulating.

I insist that nothing of the kind will happen. No, my friend, the ways of blood are not the ways of Providence. However stupid people may be, they will not fight each other like beasts: the last river of blood has run its course and now, at the moment I write to you, its source, thank God, has been exhausted. Certainly, storms and disasters still threaten us; but the tears of the peoples will no longer be the source of the benefits they are destined to receive; from now on the only wars that will take place will be accidental ones, a few senseless and ridiculous wars which will serve completely to destroy the desire of men for destruction and murder. Did you notice what has just happened in France? Was it not believed that she was about to ignite the four corners of the world? And what? Nothing of the kind occurred; and what happened instead? The lovers of glory and conquests became the subject of ridicule; the men of peace and reason triumphed; the old phrases, which even recently had rung so beautifully in French ears no longer meet with a response.

A response! By the way, a few words about it. Of course it is quite fortunate that Messers Lamarck and his cohorts do not find a response in France;[7] but will I find one, my friend, in your soul? We shall see. However, at the very thought that this might not be so the pen falls out of my hand. Whether I will pick it up depends on you; I look for a measure of sympathy in your next letter. Mr. Nashchokin tells me that you are extraordinarily lazy. Rummage a bit in your head and especially in your heart, which beats with such ardor when it wants: there you will find more subjects for our correspondence than we will need for the rest of your days. Farewell, my good and old friend. What about my manuscript? I almost forgot about it. Pray do not forget about it. Chaadaev

18 September

I am told that you have been appointed or in some other manner authorized to write a history of Peter the Great. Good luck! I congratulate you with all my heart.

Before saying something on this subject I shall await your own comments about it. And so, farewell.

I have just read your two poems.[8] My friend, never have you given me such pleasure. At last, you are a national poet; you have finally divined your vocation. I cannot express to you the satisfaction that you made me feel. We shall talk about this another time, and at length. I don't know whether you understand me correctly. The poem addressed to the enemies of Russia is especially admirable; it is I who tell you this: It contains more ideas than were expressed and implemented in this country in the last one hundred years. Yes, my friend, do write the history of Peter the Great. Not everyone here agrees with me, and you yourself probably suspect this; but let them talk, while we march forward; when one divines... the small portion of the force that moves us,

another time one will divine it... probably in its entirety. I feel the urge to say: here at last is our Dante... perhaps one that is too precocious. Let us wait.
The original was torn in this place.

Letter to Schelling, 1832[1]

Sir,

I don't know whether you remember a young man of Russian nationality whom you saw at Karlsbad in 1825.[2] He had the opportunity of often conversing with you about philosophical subject and you did him the honor of saying to him that you got some satisfaction in communicating your thoughts to him. You told him, among other things, that you had modified your ideas on many points, and you advised him to await for the appearance of a new work, which you were writing then, in order to find our about your philosophy. This work has not appeared, and this young man was myself. In the meantime, sir, I have read all your writings. To say that following in your footsteps, I was elevated to those heights to which your genius has carried you by such a beautiful flight this would be, perhaps, presumptuous on my part; I remember that you found that Mr. Cousin[3] had not understood you very well; I would be very indiscreet, a man unknown in the European world, to pretend to surpass one of such great literary reknown; but you will permit me, I believe, to say to you, that the study of your works has opened a new world to me; by the light of your spirit I have been able to see imperfectly into the domain of spacial thought which had been entirely hidden from me, this study has been a source of fertile and delicious meditations for me; permit me to tell you also that in following you along your sublime routes, it often occured to me to stop at places other than those you came to. Today I just learned through a friend who lately has passed some days in your presence that you are teaching a *philosophy of revelation.* This public lecture which you deliver now, sir, is, I presume, the development of this thought which germinated in your mind when I saw you in Karlsbad. I am not aware of what the doctrine can be which you expose at this hour in your auditorium, although, I admit I often believed that I had an inkling, in reading you, that a religious philosophy was bound to flow from your system one day, but I cannot tell you how happy I have been to learn that the most profound thinker of our time, has arrived at this great idea of the fusion of philosophy with religion. From the first moment when I began to philosophize, this idea occured to me as the beacon and the goal of all my intellectual work. All the interests of my existence, all the curiosity of my reason, was absorbed by this unique idea; and the more I advanced in meditation the more I became convinced that it was also the great interest of humanity. Each new thought which came to be grouped in my head with this first thought, seemed to me a rock which I carried to the construction of the temple in which all men one day were going to unite, in order to adore there the evident God in perfect knowledge. Lost in the intellectual solitudes of my country, I believed for a long time that was the only one

exhausting myself in this labor or at least with only a few companions disseminated throughout the earth; I discovered later that every thinking person was marching in the same direction; and this was a great day for me when I made this discovery. But at the same time I was struck by the need for an individual lofty reason, an isolated great agent made for guiding all the reasons, and all the agents from the masses. Thus, naturally I thought of you. I said to myself, as for this man so highly placed in the moral sphere of the world, to whom humanity owes in great part the fact of having rediscovered its initial and holy intuitions, can it be that the new light which is certainly going to enlighten us all, is not going to light in his eyes with all its burst, before the new light manifests itself to the eyes of everyone? Won't he who reconciled so many diverse elements of human thought, also come to reconcile the religious with the philosophic element which already touch on each other? Finally, in my intimate wishes for progress an for perfection, I destined you to accomplish the great revolution towards which, according to me, the new reason was tending: and here is what they tell me; that it is no longer terrestial science which your eloquent words preach, but heavenly science, here my wishes, my feelings about the future are in some way realized!

First, sir, I wanted to write to you not only to thank you. But, at this hour, I cannot resist the desire to know something about this new state of your system. Would it be too much to ask you (without any other claim to this favor other than my passion for the progress of human reason and my quality as a citizen of a country greatly in need of enlightenment) some data on the general bases, or on the fundamental idea of your present doctrine? For, however powerful your voice is, sir, it does not reach our latitudes; we are very far from you, sir; we belong to another solar system; and the luminous ray parting from some star in your world has an enormous road to cover before arriving in ours, and often it gets lost along the way.

If Mr. Turgenev, the friend about whom I was speaking with you before, is still in contact with you, he could perhaps tell you that my studies and my works render me worthy of your attention. In any case, at this moment I don't wish either to tell you of my own ideas, or to submit to your authority what I also call my system; I know that, if I ought to count on something this time, it is only on the interest which you yourself might find in introducing your philosophy, not only to myself alone, but through my intermediary to the whole young generation, poor at present, but rich with future, so desirous of enlightenment that the young generation has few means of satisfying its ardor for instruction. Its great destinies could not be indifferent to the wise man who aspires to embrace the universal destiny of all things. I desire strongly, sir, not to be mistaken in my conjecture this time as the other, but, although it may happen, I will never cease either to admire you, or to guard in my memory those few hours during which I rejoiced in your conversation.

Would you, sir, accept the assurances of my profound respect.

Letter to A. I. Turgenev, April 20, (1833)[1]

Here, my friend, is a letter for the illustrious Schelling, please make certain that it reaches him. A word which you said to me one day about him in one of your letters to Madame your cousin,[2] gave me the idea of writing to him. The letter is open, you will read it and you will see what it is all about. Since I speak about you, I wanted the letter to come to him through you. In sending it on to him, I'd like you to let him know that I know German; for I would like him to write to me (if he does me that honor), in the language in which he has so often made my friend Plato live again, and in which through him science has become poetry and geometry at one and the same time, and already at this hour, perhaps religion. And heaven grant it! It is time that all be but one and the same thing. You tell Madame Bravoura[3] that you do not know what to talk with me about. Very well, here is matter for conversation, in order to begin; then, we shall see. But you, my friend, you must write to me in French. Don't be displeased, I like your French letter better than your Russian letters. In your French letters there is more flexibility, there you are more yourself. But, it is when you are wholly yourself, that you are good. Your circulars in the national language are journalistic articles, my friend, journalistic articles! And I'm giving you a fine compliment at that: but it is for that reason that I do not like them. However, your French letters given the appearance of being nothing, and it is for that reason that I find them excellent. If I were writing to a woman, I would say that the letters resemble you.

Moreover, you are essentially a European. You know that I know it. French is really the garment which you have a duty to wear. You have squandered all the pieces of your national dress on the great routes of the civilized world. Then, write in French, and don't be ashamed please considering that, thanks to the new school of such good composition, henceforth you need no longer get into disorder in French as in Japanese, in which language, they say, people write indifferently from top to bottom and from bottom to top, from right to left and from left to right without it inconveniencing anyone.

Here (in a journal) they have just published an article on our philosopher: a superficiality without equal, as you well surmise. If he wants people to understand him in this country, he would do well, I believe, to answer my letter. As all people, so we others also advance today, in step, in our own way, if you want, but we always run, that is certain. In a little while I don't doubt that great ideas, once they will reach us, will find more facility in realizing themselves among us, in incarnating themselves in individuals, than anywhere else, because in our country the great ideas will have neither inveterate prejudices, nor old habits, nor obstinate routines, to fight against. Thus, for the European thinker, the fate of his meditations in our country at present could not be totally indifferent to him, it seems to me. Besides, you will see, in reading my epistle, that it is not meant to attract a letter for myself from the great man, that I write to

him, and that there is no vanity in my act, but that it's very simply that I want to know what the point of it all is and where the human spirit is in this chapter.

I would like my friend to talk with you a little bit. But I will wait, in order to be better orientated, until you'll write me first. Perhaps we'll have, who knows, many good and serious things to say to each other, and which will not be lost in space without leaving vestiges? In the meantime I must dispute with you, as is my custom. How does it happen that you, living in Rome don't understand it, after all that which we have said and resaid to one another about it! But realize then once that it is not a city like the others, a mass of stones and of population, it is an idea, it is an immense fact. It is neither the tower of the Capitol, nor the lamp of St. Peter that you must see, it is this intellectual summit with which it is so easy to become enamored when one treads on Rome's sacred soil. Then Rome transfigures herself entirely before you. You'll see the great shadows of her monuments project themselves over the whole face of the earth in prodigious teachings, you'll hear a powerful voice resound from her silent mass and tell you of ineffable mysteries. You'll know that Rome is the link between ancient and modern times, because it is absolutely necessary that there be one point on the earth towards which every man can sometimes turn in order to discover materially, physiologically, all the memories of humanity, something perceptible, palpable, in which is visibly contained the thought of the times, and it is Rome which is that very point. Then this prophetic ruin will relate to you all the destinies of the world; this will be a whole philosophy of history for you, a whole doctrine, more than that, a living apocalypse. Then is there a way of not humbling yourself before this prestigious image of so much eternity, is there a way of not throwing a veil over her shocking face! But the Pope, the Pope! Very well, the Pope, what is this but only an idea now, a wholly abstract thing? Look then at this figure of an old man, carried on his litter, on his dais, with his triple crown, in the same way always for a thousand years, as if nothing had happened; seriously, where is the man there? Isn't this the all-powerful symbol of the times, not this time which passes away, but this time which does not stir, which everything passes through, but which itself remains immobile, and in which, and by which, everything is accomplished? Say, do you want then absolutely no intellectual monument which lasts on earth? Do you need, as an example of human work, nothing but the granite pyramid which knows how to fight against the law of death, nothing?

Good night, my friend. The rest for another time, if you want. Write to me. Adieu.

Apropos. I see many of your friends, all your women, the Pachkovs, the Kindiakovs,[4] etc. Everyone of them loves you and salutes you most tenderly, and I do the same.

Moscow, 20 April[5]

Letter to A. I. Turgenev, May 1, (1835)[1]

Your letter, dear friend, brought me much pleasure. It was filled with the warmth for things of universal interest which becomes rarer among us every day: soon there will no longer be any question about it. But I must tell you also that your letter brought me some troubled feelings. The writing about which you speak isn't worth anything at all;[2] it is for that reason that I wanted to get it back from you upon your departure. Thus, I do not pretend to be answerable for it. You are going to receive another copy of the same thing; throw that one in the fire and may no trace of it remain. You realize, therefore, that I have nothing to reiterate against the benevolent censure of the countess Rzhevskaiia.[3] Explain to her please if you see her again, that I am very touched by her feelings, and that in my capacity of philosopher for the ladies, I am making an infinite case of it. Who knows? Perhaps, one day, I will tell her that myself in person. If ever I leave my country, she can be well assured that it will not cost me anything to change my direction in 200 places, and even more, in order to go to her to pay my respects. But in waiting to go to find this intellectual woman there, imagine all intellectual women are leaving here. There's Madame Orlov[4] who's leaving; there's Madame Bravoura[5] who's leaving; there is Madame Elagin[6] who's leaving; there's princes Meshcherskaia[7] who has left. The last, at least, is going to return; as for the others, they are going to look for you in Italy; I did not refrain from saying *bon voyage* to them, think it over, for God knows, we have enough of stupidity without that!

Do people speak to you about our latest productions? First we have a volume of the short stories by Pavlov.[8] Try to procure it for yourself, and read the first story: you'll tell me about the novels. If I am not badly mistaken, this piece is an event. Then we have a drama. Another event, but in a different sense. The play is entitled "Skopin Shuiskii"; the author is Kukolnik,[9] a kind of Victor Hugo on a small scale, and without the intentions, of course, You know that this Skopin Shuiskii is one of the most remarkable figures in our history, the sole figure of this grandeur in all our annals; this is a civilized hero, a hero in the style of the West. But, in the drama he is not the dominant character, it is Liapunov. The latter is a savage, a barbarian, who crushes Shuisky completely by his barbaric stature, and who is the great man of the poem. For him then the applause, for him the fanaticism of the public. You understand the meaning of this beautiful conception? There are bits of ferocious energy against all that comes from the West, against every kind of civilization: and things for the pit to clap about. Finally, what shall I say to you? It is the apothesis of barbarism. There is, my friend, the spot in which we have landed. Still, there is a curious thing which you will find in the library. A cry of the crowd enraged against the German philosophy. Note that well; never did literary impudence, never did spiritual cynicism go further; and what is even more amusing, is that this article leaned upon a charming letter of Zhukovskii , all molded, by the Germanic spirit.[10]

In our country at the present moment a peculiar operation is taking place in our spirits. People are trying to work out some kind of nationality, which, not being able to base itself on anything, since any material for that is lacking absolutely, will be, should it succeed in being fabricated, logically only a very artificial creation. Thus, poetry, history, art, are all going to be precipitated into the abyss of lying and deception, and all that in a century in which, in other places, a formidable analysis lays hands on all illusions left in the intellectual spheres. It is impossible to foretell at present where that will lead us to; there is perhaps basically a hidden good which will occur at the fulfilled hour; it is possible that this is no more than a work of analysis, which will cause us to understand, finally, that it is on a high and profound evaluation of our present position before the century, that we ought to seek to establish our future, and not on a past which is nothing but a nothingness. Whatever may be, in awaiting for the views of Providence to manifest themselves, this tendency seems to be a genuine calamity for me. Well, isn't a pity to see us simply retreating into ourselves and returning to parochialism at the moment when all peoples fraternize together, when all local or geographical personalities are erased. You know that, in my opinion, Russia was called upon to furnish some immense intellectual development: Russia was one day supposed to provide the solution to all the questions which are being debated in Europe. Placed beyond the rapid movement which carries along the spirits there, being able to consider with calm and with a perfect impartiality, all that agitates and impassions the souls in Europe, Russia was invested, in my opinion, with the task of explaining the human enigma one day. But should this tendency be prolonged, goodbye my beautiful hopes! Figure out whether I am happy about it! I, who loved only the future of my country, what do you wish me to do about it then? Instead of this detached, unprejudiced view, without the egoism which still holds back the final development of intelligence in the old society, instead of the point of view which the very nature of things imposes on us; instead of this powerful *élan* which should carry us along in one single effort, where the other peoples could only have arrived by unheard of efforts and by frightening calamities, instead of a vast thought which moreover could only have been the result of a work of the mind which has engulfed centuries and generations, people here prefer the narrow idea which all nations spurn today and which is in any case fading away. Very well, so be it; I am no longer going to get mixed up in it. I have expressed my thought aloud, the good God will do the rest. Good day, my friend. *Adveniat regnum tuum.*

Do me the pleasure of picking up some bits of information under the name Philarète Chasles,[11] whose excellent articles I sometimes find in the *Revue de Paris*. Finally, who is the abbé Lacordaire?[12] Madame Svechin[13] could certainly give you some news about it. Princess Meshcherskaia[14] who has returned, charged me to tell you that she has spoken of your *Forgotten Ones* , and that these little persecutions are practiced without the knowledge of the high

authorities, and that the persecutors have already been reprimanded in this regard.

Letter to A. I. Turgenev (1835)[1]

Thank you, my friend, for your very interesting communication. It's a genuine epistolary Revue. Your letter from London, excited my lively interest in a special way. It shows that a similar idea persists from one end of the universe to the other and that there's really a universal Spirit hovering over the world, this *Welt-Geist,* which Schelling spoke to me about and before which he bowed down with such majesty; men can thus link arms across immense distances; there's no limit to thought, and this infinite chain of men who think in unison, who pursue the same object with all the strength in their souls and in their spirits, advances then at the same pace and encircles the entire universe. Continue to make me feel the movement of the world: your efforts, I hope, will not be lost. There are, however, things which escape you. You haven't spoken to me about the latest work of Heine.[2] It's true that most of the chapters in this unusual book have appeared previously in different journals, but it's impossible for their reappearance together as a whole not to have moved the philosophic world. Do you know what I call Heine? the Fieschi of philosophy. You know that he compares Kant with Robespierre, Fichte to Napoleon, and Schelling to Charles X. I have then only continued the use of the comparison, and have come very naturally to the shocking equivalency between those two satanic beings, both king-killers each in his own way. I like to believe that Fieschi has not succeeded any more than the other; but nonetheless his book is an attempt completely similar to that of the boulevard, only with this difference that the kings of Heine are more legitimate than those of Fieschi; first of all, they go after the good God Himself, and finally all the balms of science and philosophy. Besides, both signify a similar anarchial principle the same consequence of your glorious revolution; lastly, both have decidedly come from the Parisian scum. I don't know what your present opinion is of this volcanic eruption by all the rabble of France, which has distorted the lamentable golden mean in the world, but, as for me, every day I find more reasons for wishing something of the golden mean on the world. Believe me, that event has pushed the world back a half a century, it has completely confused all social ideas; and God knows when the social ideas will get out of these difficulties! This judgment is that of the most impartial spirit possible, since it comes from a Russian mind, carried to the whole extent of the impersonality proper to it. You know that I consider the Russian intelligence to be impersonal intelligence *par excellence.* The fact is that only at our distance from European developments can men evaluate them well. With reference to Europe we are placed at the historical point of view or, if you prefer, we are the public, over there are the actors, it's up to us to judge the play.

This great play which is being acted out by the European people and at which we, cold and unmoved spectators, called *The Dissatisfied* assist, makes

me think of the little play of M. Zagoskin,[3] which is going to be performed here, at which a cold and unmoved public will also assist. The members of the Dissatisfied! Do you sense all the maliciousness in this title? I don't understand myself where the author has found the characters for his drama. Thank God, in our country one sees only perfectly happy and satisfied men. A foolish well-being, a sanctimonious self-satisfaction, that's the salient trait of the epoch in our country; and at the moment when all these blind, passionate, mutually inimical nationalities, which Christians inherited from paganism, are being erased, and when all the civilized nations are starting to abjure their respective self-conceit, it's remarkable that we dare to stand thus in imbecilic contemplation of our imaginary perfections. They say that Orlov[4] and myself, come on the scene in the new play. A strange idea to make a frondeur of Orlov, the most perfectly, the most fanatically happy man in the world. And as for me, what have I done, what have I said, that they accuse me of opposition? I say and do only one thing, I repeat that everything tends towards a goal, and that this goal is the kingdom of God. Should perhaps the Lord's Prayer be placed on the Index? I say, it's true, sometimes that the earthly powers have never hindered the world from advancing, since intelligence is an incompressible fluid like electricity; that all good and great things mature in silence and in peace; that we should not get involved in the western intrigues, because we do not belong to the West; that if Russia understand her mission she should take the initiative in all noble ideas, because she doesn't have European affectations, passions, ideas, or interests. But what's heterodox in that, if you please? And why shouldn't I still say that Russia is too powerful to be occupied with national politics; that Russia's business in this world is the politics of mankind; that Emperor Alexander understood that very well, and that this is his most beautiful glory; that Providence has made us too great to be egoists; that it placed us beyond nationalistic interests, and has charged us with the interests of humanity; that all our ideas in life, in science, in art, ought to start from that principle and return to it; that there' is our future, there is our progress; that we are an immense spontaneity, without intimate ties to the world's past, without definite relationship to its present; this is our real, logical position; that, if we misunderstand these bases, all our subsequent progress will be forever only anomaly, anachronism, and absurdity. Blame M. Zagoskin for this rigmarole and just let me say one word to you. In my opinion, among us, there's prodigious eccentricity. We accuse the government of all our crimes. The government does its job, that's all; let's do ours, let's correct ourselves. To consider indefinite liberty as the indispensable condition for the development of intelligence is a particular error. Look at the Orient! Isn't it the classical land of despotism? However, there is a source for the world's enlightenment. Look at the Arabs! Have they any idea of the benefits of constitutional regime? Nonetheless we owe them a good part of our knowledge. Look at the Middle Ages. Did it have any idea of the ineffable delights of human equality? But the human spirit acquired its greatest energy during the Middle Ages. Finally, do

you believe that the censure which put Galileo in prison was not equal to that of Mr. Uvarov[5] and company? However does the earth turn any less, launched by the kick of Galileo? Then think about it and you'll see what I mean.

I just read an excellent article of Monsieur Marc Girardin[6] in the *Journal des Debats* about the new edition of St. John Chrysostom. If you know Monsieur Girardin, tell him that a Moscovite philosopher, one of your friends, begs you to thank him for it. They must know over there that reverberation for good things resounds even in these regions in which the mean temperature stays at 30° degrees for two successive weeks, such as it did lately, and that the cold which congeals the mercury does not congeal a profound idea. Perhaps they will also realize that the century is not as atheistic as is said, when they see a religious idea welcomed from so far away at the very instant when the idea was released by a distinguished mind. Monsieur Girardin makes us see that all the recent progress in the physical sciences serves as a support to the Genesiac system of the Bible, and he backs his argument on the new treatise concerning electricity by M. Becquerel.[7] At the moment I write to you, I am finishing reading this treatise. It's curious that the author in no way suspects the conclusion which can be drawn from his book, even though he refutes even the proofs which Cuvier furnished in favor of Moses' cosmology. There's another curious thing which I find here. How is it that in this great work on electricity, in which men from all civilized nations have participated, we have contributed nothing? There were some observations on terrestial magnetism, made by strangers, by a Kupfer,[8] for example but that's all. Once Simonov of Kazan[9] is mentioned, but merely to point out that his observation is valueless. Let's admit that there's some profound lacundity in our intellectual structure. For example, we absolutely lack the capacity for logical deduction and methodical thinking. In his phrenological classification of human capacities, Spurzheim[10] designated this group by the organ of *causality*, it's precisely that organ which has remained without development in our poor heads; you only have to test the cranium to be convinced of that. The reason for this is that ideas have never played the dominant role in our lives, this is because we have never been moved by any great beliefs, by any powerful convictions. Really what are the paltry events in our religious history, in comparison with the conflagrations of Christian thought in the West? And don't say that we're young, that we're behind other peoples and that we'll catch up with them. No, we no more belong to the European fifteenth or sixteenth century than to the nineteenth. Take any epoch which you want in the history of western peoples, compare it to the one we belong to in the age of grace 1835, and you'll see that we don't find that these nations always lived an animated, intelligent, fertile life; and that an idea had been entrusted to them from the beginning, and it's the pursuit of this idea, and its development, which has formed all their history; finally that they have always created, invented, and discovered. Tell me what idea did we develop? What have we discovered, invented, created? The solution then does not lie in running after the others; we have to evaluate ourselves frankly, understand ourselves as we are,

stop lying, and find out the truth. After that we'll advance, and we'll advance more rapidly than the others, because we have come after them, because we possess all their experience and all the work of previous centuries. The European people are strangely mistaken about us. For example, there is Monsieur Jouffroy,[11] who teaches us that we're destined to civilize Asia. That's very good; but ask him then, please, what Asian peoples have we civilized? Apparently the mastodons and the other fossil populations of Siberia are the only races to my knowledge which we have drawn out of obscurity, and that still thanks to men like Pallas[12] and Fischer.[13] They tenaciously kept handing us over to the East; by a kind of instinct for European nationality, they drove us back into the East, in order not to meet us in the West. Let's not be duped by their involuntary artifice; let's seek by ourselves to discover our future, and let's not ask others to do what we must do. The East belongs to the masters of the sea, that's evident; we are further away from it than the English, and we no longer live at the time when all the eastern revolutions came from central Asia. The new charter of the Indian Company is henceforth the real civilizing element in Asia. It's Europe, on the contrary, which we are destined to teach about an infinity of things which Europe could not understand along. Don't laugh: you know that this is my intimate conviction. A day will come on which we will place ourselves amid intellectual Europe, as we are already placed amid political Europe, then we will be more powerful by our intelligence than we are today by our material power. This will be the logical result of our long solitude: great things have always come out of the desert. The powerful voice which is resounding in the world, will singularly serve to hasten the accomplishment of our destinies. Struck with stupor and surprise, Europe has pushed us away with hatred; the fatal page of our history written by the hand of Peter the Great is torn up; thank God, we no longer belong to Europe: since this day then, our universal mission has begun. Besides, see if ever an act of the government was welcomed with more national sympathies, if ever more perfect accord was seen between the sentiments of the sovereign and those of the people! That's because it's Providence itself which spoke from the mouth of the prince: that's why all the national instincts have bowed down before this voice from heaven.

That's already enough of philosophy; let's talk a little about ourselves. I have recently obtained news about our illustrious Schelling through the young Gagarin.[14] If all that this young man told me about his philosophy is not exaggerated, I can not help being very interested in this application of the teaching of *Identity* to my worthless person. It seemed that the miserable article of *The Library* has not reached him. But as for you, you no longer speak of Monsieur Ballanche.[15] Do you know that have built a whole philosophy on his feelings. I admit, however, that I was very surprised about the judgement that he made about my writing: certainly, the nasty copy which he has had in his hands could not have made him unprejudiced against me. Whatever may be, in the interest of philosophy, you should not let the links dissolve, since you yourself contributed to form them. A man with whom I would still very much

like to come in contact with is M. de Genoude.[16] There's life in this priestly soul: he does not stand with his arms crossed watching the world pass by, he knocks on all doors, he goes everywhere with his Christ. This is Catholic philosophy. The principle of Catholicism is first and foremost a principle of action, a social principle. This is the character which you'll find in it at every epoch in modern times. Catholicism alone has understood the reign of God, not only as idea, but as a fact, because it is in possession of these sacred traditions, this doctrine of the elect which, at all times, has caused the world to exist without the world suspecting it: *In mundo erat, et mundus per ipsum factus est, et mundus eum non cognovit.* You see that my religion isn't exactly that of theologians, and you'll perhaps tell me that it's not even that of the people. But I myself will say to you that it's the religion which is at the basis of the spirit, and not that religion which is at the ends of tongues; this is the religion of life, and not that of form; this is the religion which is, and not one which seems to be; lastly, this is the long-awaited religion which all ardent hearts, all profound souls evoke today, and which, according to the great historian of the future, will one day become the definitive cult and the total life of humanity; but which in the meantime does not clash against the popular beliefs, which, on the contrary adopts them, in its vast charity, although surpassing them. If I had found such a completed religion around me, when I was seeking one of them, I would have assuredly taken it up; but not having found any, I was forced to embrace the community of the Fénelons, the Pascals, the Leibnitzes, and the Bacons. In fact, you were wrong to stamp me a true Catholic. I don't deny my beliefs, no doubt about it; it would not become me, moreover, today since my head begins to grow grey, to falsify a life full of convictions; however, I admit I would not like to find the door of the hospital closed before me when I come to knock there one of these mornings. May this peroration not affect you; you know that I have long prepared for the catastrophe which should serve the ending of my history. My country will not prove my system wrong, that's very certain.

Good day, my friend, I love to believe that you will no longer reproach my taciturnity, and that you yourself will go your way always. Give me news of Madame Svechin;[17] you should believe that I am only able to interest myself profoundly in all that concerns this lady. As for your commissions, they will be filled just as soon as they occur, if not always with success, at least always with zeal. Besides, one must be more wise than I am in the physiology of passions in order to serve you well in all things. I always love you well, and that I do my best. *Ad. reg. tuum.*

There's Princess Meshcherskaia[18] who comes from the countryside; I am going to talk then with her about you.

One month has past since I wrote this letter. Bulgakov[19] was not in Moscow. I believe that he has returned some time ago; but I did not know it until yesterday. I am allowing the letter to go just as it is, so as not to undergo the trouble of writing another. In the meantime I have received the brochure of M. d'Eckstein. I beg you to tell him that I am very interested in this wholly

philosophical elegance, and that am going to write him incessantly. You never speak to me about the man who has been so long the best of friends. This is very bad of you.

Letter to Ivan Iakushkin, May 2 (1836)[1]

My Dear Friend,

Here is a book[2] which Madame Levashev[3] sends to you. I substituted the copy which I myself used instead of the one which was meant for you, so that you could focus your attention upon the things which attracted mine - you will find them underlined with my pencil. I experienced an extreme pleasure in learning that you occupy yourself with these serious studies which are so well designed to lighten the pains of your existence. I know that you have not ceased to study during your exile. It is a great favor from Providence that you have been allowed to preserve this scientific taste amid the miseries which human justice has inflicted on you. It is impossible for you not to feel profound gratitude to Him from whom all good things come, no matter what your philosophical opinions happen to be. As for me, I have the intimate conviction that the courageous and calm acceptance with which you took on your position and the feelings of sweet good will and perfect charity which you have always encountered under the weight of your great misfortune, have already won for you new insights into many things. And so, I believe that in inviting you to meditate carefully upon some of the underlined passages in this book, I will only be continuing the same work begun by God. The general idea which emerges from the remains of the new force under which nature is offered to our eyes by the sequence of recent progress in the physical sciences is that the entire cosmogonic and system from Genesis of Hebraïc traditions is supported by each new discovery, by each step forward that the human spirit makes. And what is curious is that Becquerel,[4] while refuting Cuvier[5] who had already furnished formidable evidence in favor of this system, himself provides even more formidable evidence for it.

You see, my friend, that this letter was only meant to serve as a preface to the reading which you are going to do. But could I write to you without talking about something else, without casting a sad regard on the past so filled with friendship, on the days past in the sweetest communications on the brink of an abyss? Oh, my friend, how could God have allowed you to do what you did? How could he have permitted you to play with your destiny in this way, the destiny of a great people and of your friends, beings whose intellects figured out a thousand things which other intellects can barely envision after study and work? I would dare to use this language only with you, since I know you well enough not to fear hurting you with some profound conviction or other. I have reflected much about my country since a tragic catastrophe[6] threw spaces up between us, and nothing seems more proved today than that what is lacking in our nation is profundity.

We have passed through time as others, or almost, but never have we been moved by any idea at all, and hence that is why the entire future of our country was played out one day by some young people between a pipe and a glass of wine. Nineteen hundred years ago, truth became incarnate and appeared in the midst of men; they killed it, and this immense crime was the world's salvation. But if the truth were to appear today in our midst, it would pass without being perceived, and that crime would be even greater than the other, for it would serve for nothing.

How happy I would be, my friend, if the day comes when you will be able to write, and people say that this day is close. The first lines which you may address to me might let me know that you appreciate now the great error committed by you and that in your solitude you have come to realize that an error cannot be erased before supreme justice unless one confesses it, in the same way that calculation can be corrected only after one has become aware of it. Advice, my friend. I am proud to have been able to say these things to you in the certitude that your soul will not be wounded and that your lofty intellect will be able to discern the feeling which inspired these things.

I have not talked with you about my brother, since he lives in Nizhnyi and I get news very rarely. Natalia Shakhovskoi and her sister talked to me often about you. Your children came to see me the other day; I embraced them with happiness and with sorrow.

Pierre Tchaadayeff

Letter to A. I. Turgenev, May 25 (1836)[1]

Here, my dear friend, is a letter for Baron d'Ekstein.[2] I don't know where the letter will find you, for you spoke to me about departing but you did not tell me in what direction you were heading. My delay in writing to the Baron was caused by the fact that the gentlemen of the *Observator* proposed doing something with his brochure in their journal. They have done nothing about it; and in the meantime I put off writing from one day to the next, in order to have something to say to you about that. It is said that we are neighbors of India: Witness then whether we are curious about India! That is what you'll say to Mister d'Ekstein if these letters arrive in Paris before your departure. You informed me about all kinds of things which you have expedited to Viasemskii and which he should have passed on to me, once he had finished reading them. But I have as yet received none of them. Nothing about Dominicale, nothing about Lacordaire.[3] And as for him, I hope that in Rome he will think about becoming Pope: I guarantee him the favor of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit has always been the Spirit-of-the-century; that's what must be well understood. Today the Church needs a Hildebrand who would be just as good for his time and the other was for his. Why wouldn't Lacordaire be the man called for his task? There are profound things enshrouded in the democratic element of the

Papacy. Who knows whether or not the coming conclave is not destined to regenerate the Church?

Here we have Pushkin.[4] He is wholly emersed in his Peter the Great. His book will be very àpropos when all of Peter the Great will be destroyed: this will be his funeral oration. You know that he also is bringing out a journal which he calls the *Contemporary*. Contemporary of what? Of the XVI century, and not even of that? A singular rage in seeking to assimilate us to the rest of the world. What do we have in common with Europe? The steam machine, that's all. A profound idea of M. de Tocqueville,[5] which he has stolen from me, is that the *starting point of a people determines their destinies*. Men do not want to understand this in our country: there, however is our history. More than ever then, *ad. Reg. tuum.*

Princess Meshcherskaia[6] is just as impatient as I to have a small fragment of Lacordaire, but that does not hinder us from greeting you very amicably. Good day my friend.

Letter to Princess Sophia Meshcherskaia, October 15 (1836)[1]

Here, princess, is a brochure[2] which, I am sure will interest you; it is my piece of writing translated and published in the idiom of the country. Publicity has come to grab me by the neck at the moment when I least expected it. At first you will find the fact very peculiar undoubtedly, but in reflecting on it you will change your opinion. Then after all, what is so marvelous about finally finding among us an idea, old by two thousand years, profused, venerated, preached by a thousand eminent minds, by a thousand holy persons? Would it not have been even stranger if it had never taken place? If it is true that Christianity, such as it is constructed in the West, was the principle which developed there and made everything germinate, it follows that the country which has not reaped all the fruits of this religion, even though it submitted to the law, may have misunderstood the principle of Christianity up to a certain point, may have disregarded in some way its true spirit and may have repulsed some of its essential truths. Hence one could not separate out the consequence of its principle and that which determined the principle to be produced, i.e., that which equally obliged the consequence to manifest itself.

People say that the rumor is great; I am not surprised. In any case, I know that my writing has obtained some favor in a certain region of society. Certainly it was not at all made to please the blessed populace of our literary salons, given over to the glorious practice of whist and the card game reverie. You know me too well to be assured only that this fracas is of very little interest to me. You know that I have never thought about the public, that I have never even been able to conceive of how one could write for a public such as ours; one might as well address the fish in the ocean, the birds in the sky. No matter what, if what I said is true, that will endure, if not, must not endure.

There are, Princess, acquaintances of yours who find that it would be in the interest of public affairs to forbid the author from staying in the capital. What do you think about it? Is it not similar to belittling public affairs and exaggerating the author's influence? Fortunately our government is always more prudent than the clamor of the mob which would dictate the government's action. But, if by chance the wish of these good people should be realized, I will come, Princess, to ask for asylum, and people will thus learn that seriously religious views, however fully divergent, are always sympathetic towards one another.

Letter to Myself in the manner of Michael Orlov October (1836)[1]

I have something to say to you, my friend, about the effect that your letter[2] had on the public and I have my reasons to say it to you in writing. You recall that I often said to you that your opinions would not meet with any congeniality in the land. I do not claim to earn any merit by my predictions, but you will notice that the evidence has confirmed them. My national instinct was not mistaken. I could even boast about another of my advantages: I am not an idealist at all, as you know. I credit a large part of the affairs of this world to the material factor, and that is precisely why I appreciated better than you the intellectual disposition concerning the grave issue raised by you. The abstraction in which you live has hidden the real aspect of things from you. I know you too well not to be assured that the movement triggered by your piece of writing has not satisfied you at all. And, although you did not take the initiative in its publication, the publicity, once it was accepted by you, I know is not the sort which you had aspired to. But finally, since you have not convinced anyone, what could have been the usefulness of this publication? Do you think that you have attained your goal in stirring up some minds and turning their attention towards these matters for an instant? That is just what I would like you to know and what I would love to ask you in writing rather than by word of mouth, so that you might be able to tell me your complete thought at your leisure. Hence I invite you *with all the force of my friendship* in the very interest of your own ideas to take pen in hand at once. And, believe me, though I don't share your opinions on many things, I don't attach less interest to the march of an idea which was pronounced with such energy.

Letter to Ivan Iakuskin, October 19 (1837)[1]

One year ago, my friend, I wrote to you;[2] it was at the moment when we learned that you were going to be moved and that henceforth one could correspond with you. I congratulated you discretely on this modification in your position by inviting you to give me some news about yourself. Unfortunately, this letter went astray twice in the strangest way: the first time thanks to the jealous affection of your mother-in-law[3] passionately attached to a monopoly of your friendship; the second time because of the course of an adventure which

happened to me at that time and which I am going to tell you about in order to clear my conscience. You know then that I have been entangled in writing about various religious topics for a long time. During the long retreat that I imposed upon myself after my return from abroad what I wrote remained ignored. But no sooner had I left my solitude and had reappeared in the world then all my scribbling became known and soon obtained some favor so easily accorded to every written work. My writings were thus read; they were copied, they became known outside the country, and I received some flattering testimonials from some literary celebrities. Some fragments were translated into Russian. There even appeared a serious work all filled with my ideas which frankly honored me. But then one fine day a Moscow journalist, whose journal was sadly slipping, perceiving somewhere one of the warmest pages of mine, somehow obtained the censor's approval and launched it in his journal.[4] Then came a general uproar: the journal suppressed, the editor first sent for to Petersburg and then exiled to Vologda, the censor thrown out of his job, my papers seized, and finally, as for myself, declared insane by a supreme order and by special grace, they say. Hence here I am insane for almost a year now and even awaiting a new order. Such is, my friend, my lugubrious and ridiculous story. Now you understand why my letter did not reach you. The fact is that is took a very different route, and I have not seen it ever again. I like to think anyway that the letter has not been fruitless for the people who found it like a lawful prize, for, if I remember well, the letter contained some things which could serve as a means for their particular instruction. Let's now talk about other things.

Undoubtedly you don't know that your cousin communicates some of your letters to me from time to time. When your mother-in-law is not sulking, she also lets me know those which you address to her. I know with what courage you support the weight of your lot. I know that you have given yourself over to serious study, and I admire the innumerable, solid pieces of knowledge which you have acquired in your exile. I cannot tell you how happy I am about all that and proud to have predicted it so well for you.

My friend, there is an old adage, which moreover smells a little of paganism, that there is no more beautiful spectacle than that of a wise man fighting against adversity. But I prefer the look full of serenity which you cast upon the world from the bosom of your desolate solitude. That is what superb antiquity was never able to discover; that is what a well-made spirit finds naturally in our day. However, although I do not know what your religious feelings are today, I cannot believe, I must confess, that you have achieved this peace of soul by means of this glacial Deism which minds in your category professed at the epoch when we parted. The studies which you have engaged in since must have led you to some strong meditations about the gravest questions of the moral order, and it is impossible that you could definitively have remained in this state of pusillanimous doubt which Deism is incapable of surmounting. The natural sciences are moreover far from being hostile to religious beliefs to day. Hence I like to think that the lucidity of your judgment will soon let you

envision the truths towards which they gravitate. I must even say to you that in this wandering letter about which I just talked to you, I already had the opportunity to remark, on the occasion of a volume of Becquerel[5] which was supposed to accompany the letter, that all the recent discoveries of science, of electricity notably, came to the support of Christian traditions, confirming the cosmogonic system of the Bible. One day we shall return to these matters, but I would just like you to know if you are acquainted with the works of Cuvier,[6] given the fact that nothing could serve us as a better point of departure in our philosophical excursions than the geological works of this man. You must say a word about it the first time that you write to me.

Please pardon me, my friend, if my first letter is already very saturated with my habitual preoccupations, but you understand that at this hour it is more difficult than ever for me to remove the influence of ideas which form the entire interest of my life, the only support for an unsettled existence. In any case, I am far from imposing my opinions on you. I know the direction of your mind, and I realize that neither the age, nor the meditation nor the experience of a life crossed by an immense disaster and by an immense teaching could modify an intelligence such as yours. But I also know that the epoch in which we live is so permeated with this regenerating fluid, which has already produced such admirable results in all the spheres of human knowledge, that your mind, however situated far away geographically from the great hearths of the intellectual movement, could not be entirely foreign to its influence. You have followed as best as you could the march of contemporary ideas. The orbit which you run, however eccentric it may be, is nonetheless determined by the law of universal gravitation of all things towards a same center and is enlightened by the same sun which shines on all humanity. Hence you could not be so very much behind the rest of the world. But, no matter what, you will certainly share my view on one point, namely that we have nothing better to do than to adhere, as much as we can, to the scientific region. For the moment, we can do no better.

Goodday then, my friend.

To Michael Orlov, 1837[1]

Yes, my friend, let us cultivate our glorious friendship and let the world roll along towards its indecipherable destiny. Both of us, battered by the storm, let us hold hands and stand up amid the breakers. Let us not bend our bare heads before the squalls which whistle around us. But especially, let us not hope anymore for anything, absolutely nothing for ourselves. Nothing renders one slothful like a foolish hope. Undoubtedly hope is a virtue and there is one of the most beautiful discoveries of our divine religion, but sometimes it also happens to be only a nuisance. In effect, it is an immense nuisance like hoping when one is plunged into a stagnant pool in which each movement causes you to sink even more. Hence, of the three theological virtues, let us practice the first two,

Charity and Faith, and let us pray to God that he deign to pardon us if we forget the third.[2] In any case, let us hope for our brothers, for our children, for our august fatherland, so great, so submissive, so calm. As for you and me, if the world is so sad for us, who hinders us from mounting to heaven? Isn't heaven for those who carry it off by force? On this point, it is true, you are not of the same opinion as I. You have the misfortune to believe in death. For you heaven is I don't know where, someplace beyond the tomb. You are numbered among those who still think that life is not all of one price, that it is broken up into two parts and that there exists an abyss between those two parts. You forget that it has already been eighteen and a half centuries since that abyss was filled up. Finally, you believe that the gravedigger's shovel lies between you and heaven. Sad beliefs which do not wish to understand that eternity is nothing else but the life of the just, the life for which the son of man afforded the model. Eternity can and must commence already in this world, and it will commence in effect from the day when we will devotedly wish it to commence.[3] Who does not realize that the world which surrounds us is the world such as it really exists. Who does not see that it is not a world fabricated by our hands, not one which depends on us to annihilate it. Who imagines, as little children, that heaven is the extended blue over our heads and that there is no way to ascend way up there. A fatal heritage of the centuries in which the earth, not yet sanctified by the sacrifice, found itself still not yet reconciled with heaven. Then when, oh my God, will I see all my friends finally abjure all these bits of ignorance from unclean paganism, when will they all know that there is only one way to be Christian and that is to be it completely! Still once I dreamed that it was up to me to spread some good truths among them, and I spoke to them and sometimes they heard me. But one day the hurricane came, the desert wind blew; then the sands of the desert rose up, eyes were closed, ears were stopped up and my voice was choked off. Thy will be done, oh my God! Your pauses are always just and our wishes always indiscreet. However, it was a beautiful dream, and I dare say, one of a just intellect and a good citizen. Why do I still not speak? For a long time, I admit, I aspired to the sweet satisfaction of seeing reunited around me some chaste and serious minds, some warm and pure souls, in order to invoke together favors from heaven for humanity and for the fatherland. Since my country was undefiled by all the emotions which have left such profound marks on intellects everywhere else, emotions which turned them so often, even at this hour, from the good roads in order to launch them on bad roads, I thought that my country was destined to be the first to proclaim great and holy truths which the entire universe was expected to accept sooner or later. I thought that Russia was vested with the august task of realizing the promises of Christianity before all the other countries in the world, because it had remained pure from contact with human passions and earthly interests, because it had, like its divine founder, done nothing but pray and humiliate itself, because it was probably due to that very fact alone that it would be favored with the last and most powerful inspirations. Myths, my friend, they were all only myths. Let the future be

accomplished in what ever way it should be. Cross your arms and let it come. Or else, bowing before holy images, as our pious and brave ancestors, those heroes of all imaginable acts of obedience, await in silence and in prayer. Let it burst upon us, for good or bad, no matter!

Letter to A. I. Turgenev, 1837[1]

You ask our dear K[aterina] A[leksandrovna][2] why I am not writing, and I ask you, why are you not writing? Still, I am ready to write, all the more since I have something to write about, namely the book[3] that you were pleased to send me with that scandalous post scriptum, *a qui de droit.*[4] In my opinion it lacks even that virtue which all the author's previous works had, the virtue of style. And this is not surprising: an idea that is totally false cannot be expressed well. I was always of the opinion that this man's point of departure was a lie, and now I am even more convinced of that. How can one search for reason in the mob? Where has it been seen that a mob was rational? Was hat das Volk mit der Vernunft zu schaffen?[5] I once said to some German. Let your Mr. Lamennais come here and listen to what the mob says in our country; I should be curious to see how he would apply his vox populi to vox dei here. Besides, this is not at all a Christian belief. Everyone knows that Christianity first of all postulates that truth resides not on earth but in heaven; and second, that when it appears on earth it emerges not from the multitude but from among the select or elect. I find it inconceivable how a mind so elevated, endowed with such extraordinary gifts, could assume this strange orientation, while seeing what was going on around him, imbibing the air that had engendered the revolution incarnate and the absurd *juste milieu*u.[6] He has only one precursor in the history of Christianity, Savanarola; but what a difference! How profoundly did the latter comprehend his mission, how exactly did he answer the exigencies of his time. Political Christianity has outlived its usefulness; in our age it has no meaning; it was needed when the new society was being constructed, when a new law of social life was being formulated. And that is why Western Christianity seems to me to have fulfilled completely the general task with which Christianity was faced, particularly in the West, where all the preconditions for the creation of a new civil order exited. But now things are different. The great deed has been done; society has been constructed; it has received its laws; the instruments of endless improvement have been presented to mankind; man has come of age: Neither episodes of anarchy, nor episodes of oppression can any longer stop mankind from following its path. Thus the reins of worldly power inevitably had to slip out of the hands of the Roman Pontiff; political Christianity was replaced by a purely spiritual Christianity; and where all earthly powers had reigned for so long in every way imaginable, now there remain only the symbol of the unity of thought, the great lesson and the monuments of times past. In a word, today Christianity must be nothing else but that supreme idea of time which contains within itself all the ideas of the past and future ages, and consequently must act

upon the civil world only indirectly, through the power of ideas rather than matter. More than ever before it must dwell in the realm of the *spirit* and illuminate the world from there, and seek its final expression there. At no previous time was the multitude less capable of that collaboration which Lamennais expects and demands of it. There can be no doubt that today much is being done and said in the world, but is it possible to find the Voice of God among the discordant accents of the thinking and unthinking people, in this striving of one group for the purely material, of another for the purely unrealisable? It is also true that the eternal reason is occasionally manifested in the deeds of man and that it may be to an extent traced in the history of the peoples, but should we take as its expression the shout of every rabble which, having momentarily stirred the air, leaves not the slightest trace? Here is what I wrote to a friend of mine about that book.

There is not an ounce of Christianity in all of this. Instead of demanding of the heavens new inspirations of which the Church might have need in order to regenerate herself, it is the peoples that he addresses, it is the peoples he questions, it is of the peoples that he demands the truth, this heresiarch! Fortunately for him, as well as for the peoples, the latter do not suspect that there exists in the world a fallen angel, wandering in the darkness that he himself has spread around himself, and crying to us from that darkness. 'Peoples, arise, arise in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit!' Yes, this sinister call has frightened all true Christians and has postponed the fulfillment of all the final results of Christianity; in it the spirit of evil tried once again to destroy the sacred unity, the precious gift that religion gave to men; finally, he himself destroyed that which he had once created. So let us leave this man to his errors, his conscience and the mercy of God, and may the burden of the scandal he has caused be if possible a light one to him.

I have just finished reading 'The Fire' by Viazemsky.[7] I did not know him to be such a good Frenchmen and a good Russian. Why didn't he decide to write in the language of the infidels before? Without offence, he writes much better in French than in Russian. Here we see the effect of good models which unfortunately our country still lacks. In order to write well in our language one must be an extraordinary man, one must be a Pushkin or a Karamzin.[8] I am aware that today few would agree to recognize Karamzin as an exceptional man; the fanaticism of the so-called populism, a word that I believe lacks grammatical meaning for a people that avails itself of the entire surfeit of its gigantic existence in the way in which the latter was created by necessity, this fanaticism, I say, causes many now to forget the conditions in which the human intellect develops and how hard it is in our country for a man who was born with great abilities to turn himself into a good writer. Effectrix eloquentiae est audientium approbatio,[9] says Cicero, and this applies to all works of literature. As for Karamzin in particular, I will tell you that every day I am learning to treasure his memory more and more. What sublimity resided in that soul, what warmth was contained in that heart! How sensibly, how intelligently he loved his country!

How artlessly he admired its vastness and how well he understood that the entire essence of Russia was contained in that vastness! And yet how he knew the worth of everything foreign and gave it its just due! Where would one find the likes of this now? And as a writer, how elegant and sonorous his periods, how true his aesthetic sense! The vividness of his pen is extraordinary; and in the history of Russia this is the most important thing; reason would have destroyed our history, only an artist's brush can re-create it. Now they say, what does style matter? Write any way you can, just write sense. Sense, sense! where is one to find it and who will listen to it? I know that the intelligence of other peoples did not develop in this way, there thought extended its arm to imagination and the two proceeded together, there for a long time thinking was conducted in a ready-made langauge, but others should not be an example to us, we have our own path to follow.

To return to V.,[10] no one else in my opinion is better able to introduce Russia to Europe. His case of mind is precisely of that kind that the European public likes today. One would think that he had grown up in the Rue St. Honoré rather than next to Kolymazhnyi Dvor.

Letter to Ivan Iakushkin October 30 (1838)[1] (Gershenzon published this letter erroneously as a letter to Alexander Turgenev)

I read your treatise[2] with real pleasure, my friend. I was exceedingly happy to see the facility with which you have mastered this difficult subject, assimilated the most recent scientific discoveries and applied them to it. Your piece is, in my opinion, distinguished by a novelty of outlook, the soundness of its main ideas and the diverting nature of the exposition; yet I cannot but make certain observations with regard to the final lines, in which you touch upon matters that are of great import to me and express opinions that it is impossible for me to leave unanswered. Still, even these lines pleased me, for in them I also see that new, beneficent tendency of the universal spirit which I am so fond of following and which I was able so often to foretell. And so let us turn to the crux of the matter.

You, as of old, distinguish between church teaching and science.[3] I believe that they should not be regarded as being different. There is of course a science of the spirit and a science of the intellect, but both belong to our cognition and both are subsumed in it. The method of acquisition and the extenal form are different, but the essence of the thing is the same. The distinction you draw dates to the time when it was not yet known that our reason does not invent everything on its own and that in order to come into motion it needs to contain within itself something that it did not create, namely the instruments of motion or rather the force of motion. Thanks to the new philosophy,[4] no thinking individual can, I believe, doubt this any longer: 'tis a pity that not everyone remembers this. In general, this obsolete division which opposes science to religion is not at all a philosophical one and, in addition, permit me to say, is

somewhat redolent of the 18th century which, as you yourself know, was very fond of declaring the inaccessibility for our mind of the verities of faith in this way, under the guise of a feigned respect for the teachings of the Church, concealed its hostility towards her. Your piece is written in a completely different spirit, but that is exactly why the contradiction between its ideas and its language is that much more striking. Still, it must also be said that who among us does not happen to think modern thoughts but speak in the language of the last century, and vice versa? and this is a most natural thing: for how can we manage to keep up in every aspect of our gigantic, incoherent existence with the evolution of the condensed, cohesive, long-established existence of the peoples of the West, the inheritors of antiquity? - It's impossible.

The antediluvian events described in the Book of Genesis completely belong, if you like, to history, intellectual history, of course, but one which neverthless is the only true history. Without them, the progress of the human intellect would be inexplicable; without them, the great act of redemption would be meaningless and the so-called philosophy of history itself completely impossible. Moreover, without the fall of man there is no psychology or even logic; everything is darkness and absurdity. How are we to comprehend, for example, the origin of the human mind and, therefore, its law, if we suppose that man emerged from the hands of his creator in a form other than the one in which he now recognizes himself? Besides, it must be stated that in the eyes of pure reason there is no account more credible than the one given in the first chapters of the Holy Bible, for there is no other so permeated with that absolute truth which is superior to all other truths and particularly to one that is purely historical in character. Of course this is a tale and one that is quite artless, but it is also exalted speculation, and therefore must be verified not by ordinary criticism but by the laws of reason. Finally, if the biblical story of the first days of the world is to a Christian nothing more than a canticle of an inspired witness of the Creation, to the student of antiquity it is the oldest legend of mankind, profoundly understood and cogently related. How could it be a part only of religious teaching and not of history as a whole? Is not deleting it from the earliest annals of the world the same as removing the first act from a play or the first canto from an epic? Indeed, how could a primary teaching, in which every omission appears irretrievable, in which every word resounds throughout the life of the pupil, fail to speak in its appropriate place, that is, in the history of the Creation, concerning what was in a sense Man's first encounter with God, namely, the creation of his intellectual nature? How can one begin the history of mankind without explaining whence mankind came? How can one start to study a science from the second or third chapter of that science?

The young mind which one wishes to prepare for the study of history must be guided in such a way that all its subsequent concepts relating to this sphere would necessarily stem from the primary concepts, and it seems to me that for this to be achieved one must discuss everything in a place and at a time that are appropriate; otherwise logical development will never occur. Recall the time when the human mind acquired those attributes, those instruments that it wields

so powerfully today? Was it not a time when all knowledge was religious knowledge, when all science was founded on theology, when Aristotle was almost a Father of the Church and St. Anselm of Canterbury the most celebrated philosopher of his age? Of course, it would be impossible for every one of us to repeat this entire development at home; but we can avail ourselves of these great lessons, we should not voluntarily deprive ourselves of the rich heritage we received from centuries past and from foreign peoples. Someone said that *we Russians lack a certain consistency in our minds and that we do not know how to use the syllogism of the West.* One cannot entirely agree with this harsh judgement about our intelligence pronounced by an embittered mind, but neither can one completely reject it. There can be no doubt that our intelligence is constituted in such a way that among us concepts to not arise one from the other in a necessary sequence, but appear separately, suddenly and almost without leaving a trace. We guess, rather than study; we appropriate with great skill every foreign invention, but do not invent ourselves; we know not gradualness in anything; we apprehend immediately, but also let much slip out of our hands. In a word, we do not live by continuous mediation but by momentary thought. And why is this so? Because we did not advance in a systematic way; because in the course of our hurried progress we missed some things, learned others at the wrong time and as a result found ourselves, without knowing how, at the spot where we are now. But if we genuinely wish to enter the field of the endless progress of mankind, we must certainly endeavor to assimilate all our future concepts with all possible logical rigor and pay more attention to the method of our instruction than to anything else. Then perhaps we shall cease merely to glide on the surface as we have been doing until now; then gradually all the forces of our flexible and perspicacious minds will be revealed; then we shall learn to comprehend things in their entirety and will at last become the equals not only in appearance, but also in deed, of those peoples that followed different paths and developed in a fashion that was more correct than ours, and it could be that we will rapidly surpass them, for we have in comparison with them great advantages, a selfless heart, a simiple faith. Unlike them we are not depressed by some dolorous past, a cloud of stubborn prejudice does not cast its pall over us, and we use the fruits of all their inventions, endeavors, and labors.

You say also that one must revere the wisdom of God in silence. I must tell you, my friend, that this too is a decayed phrase of the last century. One should revere the wisdom of God, but why in silence? No, it must be venerated not with a voiceless, but with a full understanding, that is, with a profound thought in the soul and with a living word on the lips. The wisdom of God never meant to turn us into speechless animals and deprive us of that advantage which distinguishes us from all other creatures. Revelation did not come into the world in order to immerse it in some mysterious fog, but in order to illuminate it with an eternal light. Revelation itself was a *word*: and a word is meant to evoke another word, rather than silence. Tell me, where is it written that the Ruler of the Worlds demands blind or mere worship? No, He rejects that inane faith which turns a rational creature into a senseless brute; He demands a faith that is

full of vision, voice and life. *And this is eternal life*, says the apostle, *that they know thee as the only God.* And if faith is nothing but the knowledge of God, then you yourself be the judge of whether it is not blasphemy to preach senselessness in the name of faith?

In conclusion I will say that one must never forget that our intellect is composed not only of that which it discovered or invented itself, but of everything it knows. What does it matter whence and how that knowledge came into it? Some of it was acquired unconsciously, and now our intellect apprehends it with full awareness; some of it was gained through centuries of effect and labor, and now our intellect uses it mechanically; but all that knowledge belongs to it inalienably and is now forever a part of it. In a word, *reason* or rather *spirit* is one in heaven and on earth; the continuous invisible emanations from the upper world into the lower, from the first moment that the two worlds were created, always preserved an eternal identity between them; and when the complete revelation or the incarnation of Divine Wisdom took place, then there occurred the fusion of the two worlds into a single whole, which in its essence can never be broken into pieces, neither through excogitation born of arrogant speculation nor through the obdurate wilfullness of an intellect swollen with its sense of identity, nor through the voluntary renunciation of a corrupt heart. The World Spirit, renewed by the new exalted idea, is no longer capable of rejecting it, breaths it, lives it, is guided by it and in spite of all the revolts of various titans, deists, pantheists, rationalists and others, solemnly follows its path and leads the whole of mankind to its exalted goal.

This, my friend, is what I wanted to tell you; but I repeat that I read your interesting piece with special pleasure and that I wish with all my heart that you should continue your efforts.

The Madman, 1837 October 30th

"Two Letters to Princess Sophia M." Letter One.
Letter to Princess S. Meshcherskaia, May 27 (1839)[1]

You haven't understood, Princess, and I'm not at all surprised. In order to understand the refutation of a writing, you say, one has to be familiar with the writing being refuted: nothing is more true. So, in a few words I'm going to put you at the heart of the matter and tell you the foundation of my idea. But first I have to warn you that it is impossible for me to admit the doctrine about the equal importance of everything contained in Scripture. The works of a healthy exegesis have taught me to distinguish in the holy book between the direct action of the Holy Spirit and that of man's handiwork; the divine inspiration which looks down on this marvelous work could not, as I see it then, render each word equally sacred and inviolable, nor each syllable, nor each letter, which men utilized, in order to translate the thought which the Holy Spirit placed in their heart. In order to make itself understood by human reason, the

divine word had to utilize human language and, as a consequence, to submit to the imperfections of this language; in the same way that the Son of God, in making himself the son of man, accepted all the conditions of the body, so also the spirit of God, in manifesting itself in that of man, had to accept all the conditions of the human word; but just as the Saviour does not triumph over the body in each of His acts in life, but rather in His life viewed as a whole, so also the Holy Spirit does not triumph over the human word in each line of Scripture, but in its totality. To say that everything in the Bible, from one end to the other, is inspiration, truth, teaching, is in my opinion, a misunderstanding of both the nature of the influence exercised by the spirit of God on that of man, as well as the divine principle of Christianity, so that because of that same divinity, the letter could not always succeed in containing it within the necessary modifications. No, certainly, this is not what I wanted to say to you. God grant that I never revert to these profound errors which cause so much evil for humanity! Who knows whether or not all the dissentions of the Christian society are due to this excessive veneration of the biblical text? Or, that supported on a text each sect, each heresy, has from time to time proclaimed itself the sole, true Church of God? Or, that it is due to a text that some people came to attribute the title of visible chief of Christianity to the Roman pontiff, the vicar of Jesus Christ, and that it is with this text in hand that men contested his supreme dignity with him and that men dispute it still?

And allow me to say this to you, Princess, it is necessary, in my opinion, that the road which leads through texts should be the most direct, it seems to me, and not that which is the most tortuous and the longest: witness, once more, the eternal discussions of the theologians and doctors of law which, as you know very well turn only on the letter of Scripture. The straightest road, in my opinion, is that of a well disciplined reason, guided by a lucid belief disengaged from any kind of greedy feeling. The text has the commodious factor in its favor in that it imposes silence and causes foreheads to bow before it; thus at all times it has been the asylum of religious pride. But, how do you expect pride to march on the straight road? That's impossible. As for me, who am not, thank God, either theologian or doctor of law, but merely a Christian philosopher, only in this capacity have I taken up my pen in order to combat the opinions of a man whom I love, and esteem, a man of knowledge, a man of the mind, but not a philosopher, and one who believes, as so many others, that faith and reason have nothing in common with each other: there is the error which I have sought to refute, and that is the whole object of my letter.[2]

Our friend pretends first that, in historical teaching, the cosmogony of the Bible, that is to say, the revealed history of the creation of the universe, should be omitted, because, according to him, this history belongs to the domain of faith and not to that of science. I have then tried to demonstrate that the history of humanity would make no sense, if we did not trace it back to the first days of the world and to the creation of man; that all would be necessarily chaos and darkness in this sphere of human knowledge, if we did not cause the clear light

from the profound truths and admirable symbols contained in Genesis to illuminate human knowledge. Coming to the crux of the subject, I said that the divine founder of Christianity never planned to impose a dumb and myopic faith on the world, as the author seems to suppose; that since Christianity is the word and the light *par excellence*, it should naturally provoke the word and disseminate the greatest daylight possible on all the objects of man's intellectual vision that, far from contradicting the facts of science, Christianity supported them with its lofty authority, while science in its turn daily came to confirm the Christian truths by its discoveries; that Christianity had furnished new and numerous instruments to the human spirit by means of the immense exercise which it was made to undergo, when the most illustrious saints of the Church were at the same time the greatest philosophers of their age; finally, that Christianity had demonstrated that the most fertile epochs in the history of the human spirit were those in which science and religion clasped hands together.

What I especially had in mind in the pages which you have just read is this false tendency to perpetuate the schism which the 18th century established between religion and science and which, neither the fathers of the church, nor the doctors of the Middle Ages, those giants of religous thought, conceived of at all, a tendency to which unfortunately more than one eminent and earnestly religious spirit obstinately clings even now, despite the wholly opposite direction of the century as a whole, which aspires, on the contrary, to return with all its power to the behavior in the good times of strong beliefs and to fuse these two great beacons of human intelligence into one sole cluster of light.

I cannot naturally reiterate all that I said, but I should still add some words to this summary recapitulation of my first words. Yes, the Bible is the most precious treasure of humanity; it is the source of all moral truth; it has spread waves of clarity in the world, it has rehabilitated human intelligence and society; humanity is obliged to the Bible in great part for the goods which it enjoys and the Bible is destined probably to become the end of the miseries which still afflict humanity; but let us be careful not to fall into the cult, the idolatry of the letter, let us be careful especially not to imagine that all Christianity is confined in the sacred volume. No, a thousand times no. Never would the divine word be imprisoned between two plates of any book; the whole universe is not large enough to contain it; it is in the infinite regions of the spirit that the divine word lives, it is in the ineffable mystery of the Eucharist that it is embodied, it is on the imperishable monument of the cross that the word has engraved its all-powerful aphorism.

You see, Princess, these lines contain a whole declaration of faith. I thank you for having furnished me with the opportunity to do this, and especially to address it to you. My religious opinons, exposed to the absurd interpretations of our salons, needed to be formulated in a manner be it ever far from absolute, and when that is done, my religious opinions could not find a better judge than you, whose whole life has been filled with the exercise of a sincere and enlightened religion.

Letter to Ivan Gagarin, October 1 (1840)[1]

I recommend, dear prince, to your national feelings of good will and others, Mr. Galakhof,[2] the bearer of this letter. You will find, I am certain, some pleasure in being useful to him. He will remain only a little time in Paris, consequently he will not abuse your patronage. Please introduce him to Turgenev and encourage the dear giddy-brained one to work a little in his favor. If Madame de Circourt[3] is in Paris at the moment when he presents himself at your place, please introduce him in her salon, all the while recalling for us the memory of the kindly countess. In six months our voyager will be back in Moscow; don't you find that this would be a good occasion to write to us post-paid?

Our society of the past year is not yet full; the majority of our *debaters* are still debating themselves with famine in their respective provinces;[4] hence I cannot tell you anything about our little world except that it still exists. In any case, we have not been jogging along any less than usual. Our indigenous doctrines, for example, acquire more consistency from day to day, march towards their last phases with huge strides, and more than one serious question unfolds in life mechanically in awaiting discussion.[5] In fact, isn't life the best of demonstrations among people so little trained as we are in logical conduct? Discussion will not fail assuredly to come - by a wintry route. But, dear prince, we really miss you, especially I do, since I like so much to follow with eye and soul your youthful and lively spiritedness.

Dear prince, accept my assurances of the most profound friendship from your very devoted, Tchaadayeff.

"Two Letters to Princess Sophia M." Second Letter.
Letter to Princess S. Meshcherskaiia, Dec. (1841)[1]

It is, without a doubt, very interesting, Princess, that there are these new tendencies within the Anglican Church which the book of Reverend I. shows us. We should bless the heaven which inspires the different Christian communities to draw closer together in a mutual way. The courteous language, so different from that utilized not long ago in similar matters, the moderation of the accusations made against opposite faiths, finally the spirit of charity which distinguishes this little volume, merits all our congenial feelings.

Much can be hoped for, I believe, as a result of this new advance which religious conviction in certain countries are making in our day, but I must admit to you that I would have liked the discussions to have been established on another plane. I believe that the best way of appreciating a principle which has reigned on earth is to consider the fruit which it has brought forth; to reduce the question to a purely theological one is, in my opinion, to limit it much too much. Your Anglican minister heatedly attacks, for example, the cult of the Virgin and that of the saints; but in admitting my position (what I am naturally far from doing,) that this cult such as it was professed by our great mother churches, was

in some way tarnished with superstition, the salutary influence which it exercized in the world must not be forgotten. In a controversy among good Christians, it's not enough that the spirit be in the truth, the heart must also be there. Didn't this cult render evangelical morality practicable in making flow torrents of love from the mother of God onto the earth and in offering a certain number of models for human weakness to imitate before being able to attain the great model placed at the summit of the Christian ladder? Isn't it to this cult that we owe what was most fertile in the Christianity of the Middle Ages?

Take away the exalted adoration of the Virgin from this epoch of savage grandeur and the profound veneration of the sacred halo, and today perhaps the world would still be in the state in which it existed then. In this age in which brutal force was sovereign, do you believe that the simple morality of the BIble and the superhuman virtues of the Savior alone would have been sufficient to tame the ways of these written men whose iron nature came to be initiated into all the depravations of Roman civilization degenerated into interminable saturnalia? Wasn't it necessary to show them virtue at their own level and to teach them to bow their foreheads, to bend their knees before these virtues? Wasn't it necessary to speak a language understandable to them and to speak more to their heart, to their imagination, than to their intelligence. It is certain, for example, that Christian art, this beautiful flower of the purest religious feeling, would not have been possible without the cult of the saints. Very well, this art was certainly more useful to the society than volumes of cold predication will ever be. Even more, I am convinced that, as for me, even at this moment the admirable temples with which the fallen-away church populates England, as silent as they are, preach the Bible there much better to her populations which are too ungrateful, it must be said, to this magnificent heritage, than the preachers of her present church. I admit, moreover, that I have trouble understanding how this church, whose very name *Established Church* indicates its origin, finds itself to be this very same church which was founded there since Apostolic times and destroyed after that by the Saxons.

But whatever may be, from the moment that the Church of England disavows its recent origin, and decides to date its existence only from the epoch in which there was only one sole Church in the world, this Church, which always exists, will, without a doubt, be very happy to open her arms to it. This sort of abjuration of the impure source which it previously glorified has left, and that is certainly a great step forward, and we should felicitate it from the bottom of our heart. How, really, could the ancient religious communities, the sources of the spread and the formulation of Christianity which has conquered the world, not rejoice themselves to see their young sisters finally understand that there could only be one sole Christian Church, and that, not some unknown metaphysical church hovering in ideal spheres, but a very visible church very definitely established by Jesus Christ on this earth, a church which He bathed in His blood, which He sanctified by His sojourn among us?

I perceive, Princess, that I have only begun to broach the matter and that I am already at the bottom of my second page; I don't know if you're going to be

satisfied with what I'm going to say to you, but I don't wish to close my letter without trying to summarize my feelings on this interesting question in a few words. I believe then that since the mission of the Church throughout the centuries was to civilize the world in a Christian way, it had to be constituted with force and with power for that; since it had to make men understand that there was only one sole way of knowing God and of adoring him, the church naturally had to be dominated by the need of preserving its own unity. If the church had taken refuge in an exaggerated spiritualism or in a narrow asceticism, if it had never left the sanctuary, it would have been struck down with sterility and would never have come to accomplish its work; finally, since the church's earthly destinies cannot be fulfilled except within the conditions of human reason - conditions which imposed on it the obligation of always combining itself with the spirit of the times which it had to pass through - the church should not be reproached for having followed the route which was traced for it by the nature of things, which was, as a consequence, the only route which would have been possible for it to follow.

One word more! You know that once during the strongest of feudal furors, the church forbade any kind of hostility during four days of the week, and it was obeyed: but, I ask you, do you believe that if the church had not been constituted as it was, it would have ever considered proclaiming this famous God's Truce, true code of peace and mercy, which, even in the opinion of Protestant writers, contributed more than any other thing to develop all the humane feelings among modern nations? No, assuredly. In this general and peaceful controversy which is thus going to be established in the religious world, it seems to me that we should never lose sight of the services rendered to humanity by the ancient beliefs, nor the necessity which they had to erect themselves with social power and to submit all other powers to themselves. Then, so full of the recognition for the good which the ancient beliefs have done, the new beliefs stretching out their hands in charity, without a doubt, the Holy Spirit himself will, I hope, deign to enlighten them and to discover for them a whole world of love in which the most divergent opinions will soon come to be plunged and fused. May this happy moment not delay to rejoice the hearts of true Christians! Especially may an insolent philosophy which pretends to accomplish a thing much to be feared in our day, namely, the reconciliation of all the irreconcilable things through the aid of some barbaric formulae, not come to pose itself as mediatrice between sincere and profound convictions, whose nature and meaning this philosophy could neither understand nor measure and which would cause all this holy work of religious minds to culminate in some clumsy compromise, in some philosophic gossip unworthy of the religion of Christ.

Letter to Ivan Gagarin, October 1 (1842)[1]

After having reflected here, I believe that one must adopt the anecdote about Princess Anna.[2] The silence of our chronicles proves nothing, since they also do not speak about the marriage of Iaroslav's other daughters, which have been completely substantiated elsewhere.[3] One can suppose that since the separation of the two churches was more pronounced at the time of Nestor,[4] it was too repulsive a matter for him to cite facts which testify in favor of the primitive unity of the two denominations. No matter what, it is clear that our religious relations with the West were of a very favorable nature in that epoch-frequent marriages with princes and princesses of Europe without there ever being a question of the changing of religion, the support requested by Isiaslav from Pope Gregory VII,[5] and the popular favor which surrounded him upon death, the history of the Roman Anthony who sailed straight from Rome to Novgorod and established a monastery there,[6] especially Metropolitan John's letter to the pope[7] and a number of our facts sufficiently prove it.

Good day, dear prince, I will not be in your localities this evening; I am going to Sesviatskoie.[8] If you want to speak with me a little before departing, come dine at the English Club. You will find me there around 5 o'clock and I will register you.

All to you,
Tchaadayeff

Letter to Schelling, (1842)[1]
Sir,

Since you did me the honor of writing to me,[2] many things have taken place in the philosophical world, the one thing which interested me most was your appearance in the new theater to which a prince, a friend of genius, called you.[3] As soon as I had learned of your arrival in Berlin, I wanted to address my good wishes to you for the success of your teachings in the center of German science; diverse circumstances, independent of my will hindered me from doing this; today I have only to felicitate you on your triumph. I don't presume to believe that my compliments could touch you infinitely, and if I had nothing else to say to you, perhaps I would have abstained from writing to you, but I couldn't resist the desire of informing you about our powerful interest in your present teaching, as well as profound feelings with which the small group of our philosophic minds greeted your entry into this new period of your glorious career.

You undoubtedly don't ignore the fact that speculative philosphy has penetrated into our country for a long time now; a great part of our youth, avid for new enlightenment, hastened to commune with this completed wisdom, whose varied formulations offer to the impatient neophyte the precious advantage of dispensing with laborious meditation, whose lofty allures are so pleasing to juvenile intellects. But what you probably don't know is that we are at this moment in the midst of a kind of intellectual crisis destined to exert an extraordinary influence on the future of our civilization; we are in the grips of a

national passionate, fanatic, studious reaction,[4] a natural result of the exotic tendencies under the empire in which we have lived too long, but which in any case, in its narrow exclusiveness, tends towards nothing less than a radical reconstruction of the idea of our country. This idea was caused not by the violent effect of some social cataclysm, which could in some way legitimize a violent return towards the past, but very simply by the natural course of things, by the infallible logic of the centuries, and especially by the very character of the nation. But, the philosophy which you have come to dethrone in Berlin, was introduced among us, and was fused with the ideas around in our land, which coupled with the spirit which dominates us at this hour, now threatens us with a complete falsification of our national feeling, that is to say, this principle hidden in the depths of each people's heart which forms the people's conscience, the manner in which it understands itself and directs itself on the road which has been assigned to the nation in the general ordering of the universe.

The prodigious elasticity of this philosophy which lends itself to every kind of possible application came to create among us the most bizarre images about our role in the world, about our future destinies; its fatal logic which almost suppresses the free will, while constituting it in its fashion, which finds inexorable necessity everywhere, in turning back towards our past, began to reduce our entire history to a retrospective utopia, an arrogant apothesis of the Russian people; its sytem of universal reconciliation by a wholly new chronological procedure, a piquant example of our philosophical capacities, led us to believe that in encroaching on the advance of humanity, we had already realized the philosophy's ambitious theories among us; finally the philosophy was going to deprive us of the most beautiful heritage of our fathers, this humility of mind, this temperance of thought which a religion strongly imprinted with contemplation and with asceticism, and brought into being. Judge then whether you were for all those of us who seriously cherish their country, a welcome sight at the center of this philosophy whose influence could have become so fatal for us. And don't think that I exaggerate this influence. There are moments in the life of people in which every new doctrine, no matter what it be, will always be invested with an extraordinary power by reason of the extraordinary movement of the spirits which characterize these epochs. But, it must admit the ardor with which men in our country flounder on the surface of the society in order to rediscover some unknown lost nationality, is unbelievable.

Men dig in all the corners of history in the country; they remake the history of all people in the world; they impose on all the peoples of the world an origin common with the privileged race, the Slavic race, according to their merit; more or less, men shake up the whole crust of the globe in order to discover the titles of God's new people there; and whereas the rebel nationality escapes all this vain labor, men fabricate a new nationality from it, which men attempt to impose on the country, perfectly indifferent, moreover, to the feverish transport of this raw, young science. But the fevers are mounting, and if the doctrine of the immediate

manifestation of the absolute Spirit in humanity, in general, and in each of its members in particular, should continue to reign in our wise metropolis, you may see, I'm sure of it, our whole literary world soon converted to this system, obsequious courtisan of human reason, charming flatterer of all its pretensions. You know that, in the matters of philosophy we are still at the beginning; it's a matter of concern then to know if we're going to abandon ourselves to an order of ideas excessively provoking all types of personal infatuations, or if, faithful to the route which we followed up to this day, we'll continue to follow in the ways of this religious humility, and this modesty of spirit which were always the distinctive trait of our national character, and lastly, the fertile principle of our unique development. Continue then, Sir, to triumph over a vain philosophy which had pretenses of supplanting yours. You see the destinies of a great nation depend in a certain way on the success of your system. Some day may the fruits of true philosophy mature among us and may we owe it to you!

Letter to Madame Sverbeeva, July 10 (1842)[1]

Your letter, dear Madame Sverbeeva,[2] has come to distract me much from my troublesome preoccupations. In approaching the moment which must exile me from this city in which I passed fifteen years of my life in constructing a life of affections and of good will, which neither persecution nor reverses were able to break, and which all are now going to be broken, I perceive that this forced emigration is a real catastrophe. You find Razhestveno[3] solitary; then what would you say about the charming asylum which is going to gather me in, if you have any idea about it! Imagine nothing but purses and bags in one round place and throw into the bargain no place in the house for even part of my books! That is what my good aunt wrote to me, despite her ardent desire to see me at her place. Situated in an almost funny country with a comfortable habitation, embellished by your being a neighbor, Razhestveno is a promised land in comparison. But let's not talk about that; it would be very bad for me to acknowledge your friendship by forcing you to endure the tableau of life which awaits me. Moreover, I have still decided upon coming to take provisions for happiness in your latitudes before retiring to my Sinaniary.[4] I learned from Cosina about the visit that the beautiful countess[5] made to you; if I meet her, I shall engage her to see you again towards the time of my trip. One evening between two romances I will make my goodbyes: that will sweeten the bitterness for me.

Let's get to the objects of your curiosity. The article of Khomiakov,[6] they say, caused very little of a sensation among agrarian proprietors; I am not surprised at that. It contains very little of a practical nature but an enormous amount for thought. As for me, I am delighted with it. I translated some phrases for Marmier and added a little commentary for his particular use. Unfortunately the interesting traveler only came to see me on the evening of his departure; as a result I was not able at all to make him appreciate all the

significance of things given the short time that he spent at my place. Here is one of those phrases accompanied by its commentary: "The rural commune," says the author, "subsequently found a chief in the person of the landed proprietor." Nothing is truer, but what follows from that? The fact that the commune was first without a chief, that this latter was established in our country in a legal manner, and that its establishment was a benefit for the country, since it served to organize this admirable commune in a definitive way, the base, according to the author, for our social order and the germ for all our future prosperity. Finally, one must not tamper with slavery, unless one might wish to disorganize the commune and send us back to the golden century of antideluvian Russian. The text says: "The village commune subsequently received its definite head in the person of the landowner." You see that my paraphrase is perfectly correct. I call upon the author himself. Another proposition of Khomiakov which I confided to the discrete meditation of Marmier:[7] "The forms of our existence," he says, "organic product of the soil and of the national character, contain the mystery of our greatness."[8] Marvelous! But then is not serfdom, one of the most salient forms of our existence, also a necessary product of the nature of the country? Does it also not contain the mystery of our greatness? Once again then don't dare to tamper with it! Well, that's enough about Khomiakov and his article. Madame Orlov[9] is set up in Sesviatskoye, she is still courageous but very sad. The idea of leaving her and not seeing her again is one which oppresses me the most. I hope that this good Orlov will not bear a grudge against me. One sees clearly, they say, in the land which he inhabits. Hence he will know how dear his memory is to me and how much I would have been happy to prove it to his family. Turgenev is en route for Moscow. His patron should be here in a few days.[10] So, you will not have long to wait before seeing the dear man at your feet. Natalie[11] has had two bits of news from her sister, that wandering heart seeking at this hour emotions on the picturesque shores of the Rhine. May heaven help her! You probably know about the incident involving the beautiful Dasha, a very natural incident given her figure. The result is that Lise[12] travels without a personal maid, so she is doing marvelously, she says, but could you tell me how she makes up her hair? It is true that she has the resources to not do it at all. There, I believe, I have satisfied all your curiosity.

So good day, my dear and living cousin. I forgot to tell you that our friend Golitsyn marries a princess Dolgorukaia, daughter of Elise Dolgorukaia;[13] the wedding will take place here in a few weeks. It is John Gagarin who tells me all that; he is just leaving my place and charges me to present his good wishes to you. Good day once again. Please accept my profound and sincere devotion.

Pierre Tchaadayef
P.S. I was going to post this letter, but your husband took charge of it.

Letter to Michael Zhikharev[1] (1842)

Here, my friend, is the next to the last issue of the *Moscovite*; as for the last issue I cannot give it to you yet, firstly because Natalie[2] just took it away from me and secondly because I must re-read again Khomiakov's article[3] on the "well bound" peasants, as, they say Menshikov calls them.[4] The first time that one of your people will come here you will have this issue, as well as the discourse that Shevyrev[5] read at the university session and you will be able to amuse yourself in reading it with all the imaginable intonations of the author. I still don't know when I shall leave; I am sick and I am making my preparations for the trip - that is all that I am able to tell you for the moment. Good day, my dear friend. Give my sweetest wishes to my cousin and also to your father and to the rest of the family.

To T. (Alexander Turgenev)[1] (before 1843)

Mr. xxx[2] is sick, hence it is I who will respond to you; you know whether I have the right to do so. And firstly I must say to you that I regret very much having provoked your letter.[3] But what do you want? Sometimes one is condemned to obey one's first impulses, if only to be sorry for it afterwards. It is the language from a wounded man that you are going to hear, I warn you, in any case from a man for whom neither your shabby whims nor your raging angers have smothered his good feeling for you.

Your soul is sick, you say! Heaven grant that your mind were in better health! You would evaluate things and humans better. That's a fact. You are good, easy, without pretensions to profundity or to seriousness, an indefatigable and sometimes interesting gleaner, an amiable charlatan, and don't reject that title but accept it with good naturedness. Finally, a fault-finder by privilege and philanthropy by posture: that is the way you are known and that is the way you are loved.[4] But look one fine day when your patron leaves the court, then you would suffer the consequences.[5] As the official support just left you, you needed another. Instead of requesting this support from longtime honorable friendships, from services rendered and received, from the esteem of your compatriots, you thought to find it in some unknown glorious antecedents, in your liaisons with some complacent celebrities of Europe, in the imaginary austerity of your principles and especially in this immense philanthropy for which the convict has the premises and the world has the noise.[6] Hence, there you are among us in your new costume. Unfortunately, the clothes are not at all made to fit your figure. It was cut for a mind of a certain hardiness and uncommon competency; you know how formed that one is which puts it on one's back. From this flow all the perplexities into which you have fallen during your stay in Moscow. First you found the public had become cold towards you. It is not so at all. The public remained the same; it is you who have changed. As for the public, one must really tell you, it never saw anything in you but a joke. But this time you had wanted to be taken seriously. The public simply did

not wish to lend oneself to it. Then came your burlesque whims, your fantasy misunderstandings, your jealous suspicions. You became peevish, brutal and haughty. All the evil passions, dormant for a half a century within a blessed contentment, awakened suddenly, noisy, cynical and envious. Hence the need for the public to turn its back on you a little. In any case, having been accustomed to treat you with indulgence, the public did not stop being favorable to you: only instead of sympathy the public had only complacency for you. What I just told you, you know as well as I. But what you probably do not know are other things which were so well instructed to you, and that is precisely what you must know.

You understand that it is not possible to cause the amiable person whom you know to descend into the ridiculous arena where, thanks to you, we play around. I cannot speak to you about the most cruel teasing which you made him experience, and all this at the moment when he was plunged in a supreme sorrow,[7] nor can I speak to you about your pretentions about having a monopoly on his friendship, nor finally about the resignation with which he supported all this overflow from an unheard-of egoism. But I can and I must speak to you about me, for that then is something which you understand perfectly. Moreover, no matter how ridiculous the debate between us may basically be, yet I could not accord you impunity of discourse on my account which you grant yourself so liberally. So to listen to you or better to see you, because you do not articulate anything, one would say that you have some great grievance held against me. I am mistaken, grievance is not the word; your bad attitude towards me is perfectly disinterested; it is a virtuous indignation, a noble modesty which alone motivates you against the versatility of my opinion, against the incontrovertible evidence of my own self-love.[8] Very well, I admit, I am not at all one of those who remain voluntarily moulded in one idea, thereby arranging history, philosophy and religion to fit their theory. I have many times changed my opinion on a thousand things and I promise you to change them once again, each time that I again recognize my error. As for the second point, concerning my own self-love, yes, I am proud of having preserved all the independence of my mind and of my character in the difficult position that was created for me, and I dare to believe that my country will take that into account. I am proud for not having seen any of the serious congenial feelings of those inclined towards me, become redressed amid the irritating debate raised by me. Finally I am proud to count among my friends weighty and sincere minds of all opinions. One word more. Oh, undoubtedly Christian humility is an admirable thing and in practicing it one experiences an ineffable happiness, but unfortunately in certain given conditions, Christian humility has the air of laziness and you who are so much and so well experienced in imaginary airs, you must know all that just as well as I. Return to my opinions, it's the capital point.

There was a time when, like so many others, I found the actual state of things in my country to have been extremely bad, when, like so many others, I thought that this great cataclysm which we call Peter the Great caused us to

revert instead of making us advance and that consequently we must retrace our steps and begin our career again in order to attain some great results in the intellectual order.[9] Better instructed, I changed my mind. Today I no longer think that Peter the Great committed violence on his country, that one fine day he robbed it of its national principle and substituted western Europe for it, or that, launched into space by this formidable arm, we wandered aimlessly like a star plunged into a strange solar system and that at this hour we need some new centripedal impetus or other in order to have us re-enter our natural sphere.

Certainly, this man was a revolution and I am very far from denying it, but a revolution brought about, as all those of the universe, by the nature of things. Peter the Great was only the energetic expression of his country and of his epoch. Initiated into the march of humanity despite herself Russia, had for a long time recognized the superiority of European countries especially in the case of armaments. Tired out from her old routines, bored with her isolationment, Russia aspired only to enter into the grand family of Christian people. The human idea had already penetrated into all her pores and fought there, not without success, against the idea stained by the soil. Finally, at the moment when the great man called upon to reconstruct Russia came to sit on the throne, Russia asked for nothing better than to be reconstructed. Thus, he had only to add the weight of his strong will in order to make tip the scales in his favor.[10]

As for the means which he served to realize his program, he found them very naturally in the instincts, the forms of life, and in the very physiology, so to say, of his nation of which he was at one and the same time the truest and most marvelous symbol. So his people did not disappoint him; if they protested, it was in a profound silence and history never know anything about it.

A militia, drunk on anarchy, great doers of nothing in their pillaging, driven mad by their label of slave, some mutinous priests, some stupid sectarians are not able to be witnesses of the national feeling. Moreover, the type of opposition which he encountered in a part of his people did not address itself at all to his reforms, since they dated from the day of his ascent to the throne. I am too good a Russian, I have too high an opinion of my nation to believe that he could have succeeded if he had found a serious resistance on the part of the country. I know well that certain initiates of the new national school, lost children from this dear school which contradicts so adroitly the great historical school of Europe,[11] will tell you that Russia, yielding to the impulse imprinted by Peter the Great, in effect abjured momentarily its nationality in order to find it again later by some sort of process unknown to the rest of humanity. But one instant of reflection will make you see that what you have there is only an ambitious phrase, badly borrowed from this elastic philosophy which ravages Germany today and which believes having explained everything when it had drawn up a formula in its strange slang.[12] The truth is that in the hands of Peter the Great, Russia abdicated her prejudices, her barbarous arrogance, some remains of liberty which she cared little about and nothing else by the very simple reason that a nation cannot in any possible case renounce itself totally and

even less so in order to give itself the singular pleasure of rebounding towards its past one day with a new energy - a bizarre evolution that human reason could not conceive of nor its nature accomplish.

But, you must know that this was not at all the first time that the Russian nation used this right of abdication which all people possess naturally, but which all people do not like to make usage of as frequently as we. Remark that this is not a reproach that I address to my nation, certainly great enough, strong enough, and powerful enough to be able with impunity to permit itself from time to time certain whims of humility. This taste for abdication, firstly the fruit of a certain complexion of mind particular to the Slavic race, exalted subsequently by the ascetic character of our beliefs is a necessary fact, or, as people say today in our country, an organic fact. One must accept it with good grace, just as the country accepted the different foreign or national yokes which weighed upon it one after the other. To deny an essential trait of the national character is to render a very bad service to this nationality which we are today so preoccupied with finding again.[13]

So here are some of these abdications of which we speak: First our history opens with the singular spectacle of a foreign race invited in to the government of the country by its very own citizens, a unique factor in the annals of the world, even in the viewpoint of Karamzin, and which would be inexplicable if all our history did not serve as commentary in a manner of speaking. Then comes our conversion to Christianity. You know how it took place. *If the prince and his grandees, the people said, find this doctrine good and wise, it must be so* and the people ran to jump into the waters of the Borysthen.[14]

Finally arrives the long Tatar domination, this great thing which a false patriotism hypocritically and obstinately refuses to understand and which contains so formidable a lesson.[15] As is known, the Mongols never occupied Russia; but there is no real conquest, i.e., one winning a necessary submission without occupation. One could say that a vague instinct was revealed to our fathers that in isolating themselves from the rest of the world, they had sinned before God and that the scourge of the Mongol invasion was only a just punishment. Such was the resignation with which they endured this horrible yoke. So, however horrible it was, it caused more good than bad for us. Far from breaking the national principle, the Mongol yoke made it develop and mature even more. It is the Mongol domination which shaped us for all imaginable submissiveness; that is what rendered the famous reigns of Ivan III and Ivan IV possible, reigns in which our power was consolidated, when our political education was achieved, when all the pious virtues of our ancestors were manifested with such brilliance. Finally it is the Tatar yoke which also rendered the task of Peter the Great so easy and which had more of a part in the formation of this national colossus than one perhaps thinks. The reign of Ivan IV itself can be considered in a way as a prolonged abdication during which the nation deposed at the foot of her prince not only all her titles but even her beliefs, since we see the nation near to recognizing as heir to the throne the fruit of a

polygamy without example among Christian people and spill her most pure blood for this imaginary symbol of royalty.[16]

This strange peripeteia of this strange regime is known, a real pact concluded between the nation and her sovereign, in virtue of which the nation delivered herself feet and feet linked to an insane master.[17] This fact alone says to you much more than anything else I could say to you. But there is another more important abdication in our history, an abdication more fruitful in results perhaps than all those which I have just cited, and which I hasten to speak with you about since it is directly attached to the reproaches which you addressed to me. You guess that it is the establishment of serfdom in our countryside that is the issue.

Here is what you find in a journal well known for its national inspirations. The article deals with the imperial decree creating a new method of liberation in favor of cultivators.[18] After having wisely established that the unity of the commune is an essential element of our social system, the author adds: *the rural commune obtained subsequently a direct chief in the person of the lord.*[19] These remarkable words, escaping from the elegant and patriotic pen of one of the decades of the national school contains, in my opinion, all the past and all the future of our agrarian population. So I need only make a few words of analysis to make you understand and appreciate my point of view on this matter.

First of all, what is striking in the great social pact which definitively constituted the inferior levels of society in our country is that not only does one not find anything similar among other Christian nations, but also that among them things followed a march absolutely inverse to that which things followed in our country. Starting out from servitude, the cultivator in western Europe arrived at liberty, starting out from liberty he arrived at servitude in our country. There Christianity abolished slavery, the Christian era saw it born in our midst. As for the very manner of the establishment of servitude there is nothing in common between the way it was established in the countries of western Europe and the way it was established in Russia. The result of invasion or of victory, it was in a way made legitimate in those countries by the ancient right of war. Everywhere over there where you would find masters and serfs you would also find either one race superimposed upon another or else men reduced to slavery on the field of battle. In our country it is very simply one part of the nation which subjugated the other to itself, and that happened without the subjugated part ever being advised to demand the loss of its liberty back, without the subjugated part of the nation ever feeling humiliated, blemished, or degraded the least bit in the world by this change which came about in its destiny.[20]

Here are the different phases of this singular history: First came a simple administrative measure fixing a time of the year for the renewal of lease between the landed proprietor and the cultivator of the land. Then came another administrative measure attaching the cultivator to the soil. A third which included him or registered him in a kind of crude land survey of the landed proprietor. At last came a final administrative measure which confused the land

cultivator with the domestic serf, or the slave properly speaking, and there riveted his chains for all time. Such is the simple march of facts. It is evident that this march, in which the sovereign only intervenes as an administrative power must necessarily be the effect of an order of things on the very nature of the social milieu in which it came about, or dependent upon the moral conformation of the nation which experienced it, or else both at the same time. Hence, in effect we see all these measures provoked by the impervious need of the epochs in which they saw the light of day at the same time that we find in our own very institutions, so profoundly imprinted with the national character, a natural inclination towards this necessary dénouement in our social drama. Open the initial pages of our history, meditate upon them not with ambitious patriotism, the braggart of our days, but with the modest religious patriotism of our fathers, and you will see everything announced in the forms and in the diverse combinations of our national existence since its infancy, this inevitable development of the society. You will see that in its very cradle the nation already bore in its heart the germ of all that today causes revulsion among superficially intelligent persons, cast in the mold of a foreign world. You will see that since those early days all already tend, all aspire to submit themselves to the yoke of some personal power. All is organized, all is arranged within the narrow conditions of the domestic regime and finally all seek shelter under the paternal authority of a direct chief. Amid all that, you will be able to note also an elective element, weak, confused, powerless, being introduced sometimes somehow in the family enclosure, but never encountering the positive idea of some law or other and dominated everywhere by the sovereign element; the elective element petrifies in the family. Finally the elective element is such a nullity that our history only seems to mention it in order to demonstrate its sterility, when it is not at all combined with the feeling of human dignity. That is what the learned author of the article understood perfectly.

According to him, it is the rural commune which is the cornerstone of our social edifice. In it reside all the energies of the country; in it is hidden the entire mystery of our greatness. According to him, it is a unique principle in the world, it is something which only belongs to our nation alone, something intimate, profound, singularly fruitful, something which made all our history, which marks all the memorable incidents in our national existence and envelopes it completely. Finally, it is from the bowels of the rural commune that the cry of salvation came from when our beautiful fatherland was set on fire by its own children and delivered over to foreigners.

But, one must know that there was a time when this commune was very far from being so admirably constituted as we find it in an epoch more close to our own. It is true that the author acknowledges the operation of communal element ever since the origin of our society, but it is evident that this operation could never at all be exercised in a very profitable way in our country so long as the population moved about constantly on its immense surface. This was caused either by the very effect of the geographical nature of Russia, or else by the empty spaces which foreign invasions created, or else finally by this taste for

migration so natural to the Russian people, a taste to which we owe in great part the enormous extension of our empire.[21] The learned author himself would undoubtedly be very embarrassed if he had to make us understand the precise form of his commune as well as its legal character, amid this tossing about of a not very numerous population between 64 and 45 degrees of latitude, but whatever the communes were like, moreover, it is certain that they needed to be modified, that one had to put an end to the vagabond existence of the peasant. Such was the motive behind the first administrative measure which tended to prepare the peasant for a more stable social state. As is known, this measure was due to Ivan IV, this prince so long misunderstood by our historians, but whose memory was always dear to the Russian people. A narrow moral feeling ridiculously branded him, but the broad morality of our day absolves him completely. The above measure was due to this prince whose bloody axe did not cease to hack away around him for forty years in the interest of the people. Hence, it would not at all be reasonable to see in it anything other than an act dictated by sincere good feelings for the agrarian class.[22]

The second measure belongs to the reign of his son or rather to that of Godunov, the person elected by the country.[23]

To Count Adolphe de Circourt, Jan. 15 (1845)[1]

I just received, my dear sir, the issue of the *Semeur* containing the fragment from the sermon of our archbishop.[2] The journal was addressed directly to the Monsignor who kept it up until this moment. That is why I have been so long in answering you. It would have been assuredly better had the indiscreet issue come to me first and even better still had the sermon been printed in its entirety and without the strange commentary of the editor. Fortunately, His Eminence did not pay much attention to it. I just saw it; I received for it the most gracious reception, the good words which pr the fragment will have put things in equilibrium.

You know very well that all our prisons are empowered with chapels and that there is no more indulgent church on earth than the orthodox church. Perhaps it is too much so. It is in the nature of the religious principle to exalt itself in that which it encloses most intimately and to hyperbolize, in a manner of speaking, that which it contains most profoundly. But our church is essentially ascetic just as yours is essentially social. Hence the indifference of the one towards everything which happens outside herself and the lively interest which the other has in everything. There are the two poles of the Christian sphere turning on the axis of its absolute truth, of its real truth. In practice one often sees the two churches changing roles, but one must not judge principles based upon isolated cases. To see a Reformationist in our holy prelate is enough to make one burst out laughing. He himself laughed about it heartily. The journalist very simply took an oratorical movement, very well motivated as it was, for a religious revolution. I don't get tired of admiring your most serious

minds when they do us the honor of speaking about us. One could say that like inhabitants of another planet, one can only observe us by the use of those optical instruments which make one see objects in reverse. It is true that it is a little our own fault. The error into which you so often fall in our regard comes partially from the small part that we have yet taken in the general movement of the ideas at the heart of humanity. But the time is not far off when, I hope, we shall come to take the place reserved for us among the civilizing people of the world. You who come to see us with your own eyes, you must have learned that the qualifications are not lacking in us to obtain that. If nonetheless despite that, you still may not know possibly what exactly are these qualifications. You have only to become informed about them by this new school, the honor of Russia, whose sublime enthusiasm and lofty significance you yourself can appreciate. And I tell you that this new school could furnish you with an ample catalogue of these qualifications. You are aware that I am becoming a little Slavic, as Madame de Circourt would say. What do you want? It is the way of escaping a contagious disease which is all the more active in that it is a very new pathological phenomenon in our climate. At the moment when I write to you, for example, we have here a *course in the literary history of Russia* which stirs up all sorts of passions at the same time as national dust. The learned professor is truly marvelous.[3] You could not imagine all the admirable consequences which he extracts from the very small number of literary monuments scattered on the immense steps of our history, and all the buried powers which he discovers in our past. Then, in the face of this noble past he casts an eye on the paltry past of Catholic Europe and makes it feel ashamed with an unbelievable nerve and disdain. And don't go imagining that this new doctrine does not find warm congenial feelings among us. It's been a stunning success. Remarkably adepts and adversaries alike all applaud it; the latter even more vividly than the former, charmed as they are apparently with what they also take to be the triumph of their ridiculous ideas. I don't doubt that the learned professor is going to come to demonstrate with evidence the superiority of our civilization over yours, a thesis which contains his entire program. What is certain is that more than one recalcitrant mind is already reduced to silence by the ascending of his lucid, warm, picturesque wording which is strong especially because of the support of an enlightened patriotism, which recalls so well that of our fathers, strong especially because of the well-assured favor it finds in the supreme spheres of society, where the tendencies have been pronounced a thousand times with verve on these interesting questions. People say that he plans to publish his course. I will be happy to make it known to the learned of Europe in the universal idiom of the civilized world. Transcribed into French he could not fail to produce a profound sensation in your latitudes, perhaps even to convert a good number of people in this old Europe completely exhausted by its sterile routines. And, I am certain, old Europe does not suspect at all that there exists at its doorway a completely unknown world, rich in all the elements of progress which Europe

needs, containing solutions for all the problems which preoccupy her and which she is unable to resolve.[4]

So, nothing is more natural than this superiority of our civilization over that in your countries. After all, what is your society all about? The incoherent product of a multitude of heterogeneous elements, the confused amalgamation of all the civilizations of the world, the result of violence, conquest and usurpation. Whereas for us, to the contrary, we are nothing else but the simple, logical result of one sole supreme principle, the religious principle, the principle of love. The only element foreign to Christianity which could have entered into the construction of our social edifice is the Slavic element, and you know how much it is elastic and docile in nature. So, all the leaders of the literary movement,[5] which is being accomplished at this moment in our midst, no matter what, moreover, is their divergence on other questions, agree *in toto* on this point that we are God's true people in modern times - a point of view which is not lacking, if you will, in a certain perfume of the religion of Moses , but which you will nonetheless find to have a singular profundity, if you consider the magnificent role which the church played in our history and this crowd of our ancestors crowned by the church with the sacred halo. There is more, one of our most remarkable minds (and by that trait you will easily recognize him) comes to prove, with that powerful logic which is peculiar to him, that Christianity was only possible in principle in our social milieu and that it could only expand completely there, since we were the only people in the world conveniently organized to receive Christianity in its purest form. From this it follows, as you see, that strictly speaking, Jesus Christ could have saved himself the trouble of sending his apostles out to the entire world and that the apostle St. Andrew perfectly sufficed for the task parcelled out among them.[6] It is of course well known that once revelation arrived at its complete development in this atmosphere prepared for it, it would be pointless for it to continue its march in order to attain its universal regeneration and you consequently can nourish the hope of one day seeing it come among you up to a certain point. Perhaps people find that it would be quite awkward to reconcile all that with the cosmic principle of Christianity, professed with such obstinacy in the other hemisphere of the Christian universe, but it is precisely this capital difference between the two doctrines which gives us so many advantages over you. Far from being condemned as you are to a perpetual immobility, far from being encased in dogma as you are, our beliefs, on the contrary, admit the most fortunate and most varied applications of Christian principle and notably there are applications to the national principle, an immense privilege for which you could only be very envious of us. Our dear professor also told us the other day from the height of his chair, in the accent of the most profound conviction and in the most sonorous tone that we were the chosen vessel, destined to gather together and to preserve the evangelical dogma in its purity in order to transmit it at the proper time to nations less fortunately constituted than ours.

This new itinerary of Christianity, an interesting discovery of our native intelligence, will be admitted undoubtedly by all the Christian communities as soon as it will become known, but meanwhile you must not be too surprised if one fine day you learn that at the moment when you are plunged into the darkness of the Middle Ages, we march in giant steps along the route of all imaginable progress and that we possessed since time immemorial all the benefits of modern civilization and most of the institutions which no longer exist in western Europe, even at this very hour, except in the utopian state. There is no need to tell you what was the fatal event which stopped us in the midst of this glorious march across the centuries. You have heard it repeated a thousand times during your stay in Moscow, but I cannot allow you to ignore my personal opinion on this matter. Yes, it is the invasion of western ideas, of these ideas repulsed by all our historical antecedents, by our national instincts which paralyzed our powers, which falsified our beautiful tendencies which disfigured all our virtues, which finally made us descend to your level or close to it. Hence we must retrace our steps, we must return this past which we have so nastily thrown off, we must reconstruct our past as best we can and stay there never to leave again. Such is the work which today occupies all our good minds and to which I associate myself from the bottom of my heart. Its success is the object of my wishes and that all the more so since I am convinced that the type of rotation which we are experiencing at this hour can only be fully appreciated on the day of its definitive triumph. I do not know the opinion which you could form for yourself concerning all that I just told you. I trust that you will not disdain my opinion, but it is always so that if you return to see us in some years hence you will be able at your leisure to admire the fruits of our retrograde development.

At the moment when I was going to fold my letter I received your article in *Semeur*. I trust that His Eminence takes the advice of a good Christian. Your observations seem somewhat severe to me, however just they basically are. We shall speak about them when I shall have the opportunity of seeing what effect they have on our venerable pastor. I have not yet been able to procure the issue of the *Bibliothèque de Genève* of which you spoke in your letter, but I am counting on reading it for you one of these days.

Would you please remand me to the good graces of Madame de Circourt and assure her of my devotion. I pride myself that she has not kept too odious a memory of our Slavic fanaticism, in general, and of mine, in particular. I also have little taste for exclusive and narrow nationalities. I even admit that I moderately esteem this geographical virtue which pagan antiquity made such a noise about and which the Bible ignores. However here is a reflection that Madame Circourt will permit me to submit to her without, of course, any correction: No doubt that Paris is today not the great nucleus for the social movement of the world, its salons are not the privileged centers of the verbal thought of the century, but it is nonetheless certain that it is to Paris that ideas and minds still go to seek their enthronement, their glory and their title. But one should not deny either that there are also, here and there, some little nuclei, some

obscure centers and that in these nuclei, in these centers, some poor ideas, some poor intellects exist who lay claim, without too much presumption, if not to profound interest than at least to some serious curiosity, especially on the part of people whom a bad wind has sometimes stranded on our arid shores and who could consequently appreciate the efforts which we make to clear up the landscape.

Accept , my dear sir, the expression of my devoted sentiments.

Letter to Princess Meshcherskaiia, Apr. 2 (1845)[1] after the winter of 1843-44

Do you pardon me, princess, this long delay? I could not doubt it; your letter itself is my guarantee. But I must tell you what impeded me from writing to you. It is something intimate which you understand perfectly, you who possess the wisdom of the heart as much as that of the mind. So imagine how one fine day I intended to ask if I had truly merited the human favors of which I was the object throughout the course of my life? After a moment's reflection, I naturally found that my life had all amounted to nothing. And do you understand what an honest mind must experience when it comes to recognize that throughout its life on earth it had only lied! Such was the mental disposition in which your letter found me. But, I ask you, how to find the means of replying to charming letter under the influence of such a despairing idea. I was literally obsessed with this nightmare for a month. Finally, here I am delivered thanks to a very simple procedure and one which I would be charmed to teach you if I were less pressed to speak to you about other things. Please believe, princess, that your letter brought a moment of true happiness to me. A precious episode in my life is based on the fact that you deigned to fill it with your feelings of good will at once amiable and also serious. Even if I should never see you again, it would still remain the most precious of my memories. But I do not want to believe in such a sad future; I wish to live in the hope that these soirees of which you speak to me in such a touching manner could return one day. You ask me what person has replaced you in the habits of my life. No one, I beg you to believe it, has had this temerity. Your place is empty in my feelings as well as in the hours of my day. You were very correct in regretting for me the departure of xxx,[2] but you know that it is due to the friendship of xxx[3] that I owe mine, whereas it is to you alone that I owe yours. Hence permit me to be a little angry with you for not having considered this capital difference. xxx[4] is assuredly an eminent person, but she is far from possessing this frank and cordial benevolence with which you honor your friends. She has the misfortune of putting too much spirit in feeling; she calculates too much, which results in her not calculating enough. The heart is not geometry; its calculations are always false; it never calculates better than when it does not calculate at all. All that does not impede her from meriting all imaginable affections from her friends, but she must be content with a reasoned friendship, since she is unable to accord any other herself. As for me she will always have my most sincere

and profound sympathy, if only because of the memory of this excellent man[5] whom I found one day amid life like those soft winds which one sometimes finds in the country, which make you experience the moment better only after the chill of the surrounding atmosphere. Perhaps you don't know that xxx[6] is going to Italy by way of Constantinople. xxx wants to keep her away from Moscow as long as possible. Nothing is wiser in my opinion. For a long time already the sojourn in Moscow could only be fatiguing for her. Her existence must be newly arranged completely in order for her to find some charm again in this city, so filled with her husband. Besides, family affairs go marvelously well thanks to Mr. xxx the losing guardian and xxx the giving guardian.[7]

xxx is very sensitive about his memory of you, despite the somewhat severe manner in which you treat him. He has one of those good natures which are always content provided that one occupies oneself with them a little, no matter how. You want to know what he does. Well, here it is: the dear fellow is falling into dust, in this kind of dust which only arid soils provide, one that the slightest breeze carries out and transports in all senses. He fastens as best he can upon his antecedents, real or supposed, and upon good souls from whom he still filches favor. He always goes around as he used to, exploiting what he finds within his reach but with a little less artfulness. Finally he always practices a little banal philanthropy here and there, a little worn-out liberalism which helps him fill the emptiness of his existence for better or worse. And thus in this way he descends headlong into oblivion.[8]

Princess xxx has just written to me. There are very beautiful things of the world - and, certainly, I have not at all merited those things. Fortunately I have my recipe against illusions of friendship. Princess xxx has deigned to inherit also a little of your feelings of good will towards me; at least that is my personal interpretation of the gracious smile which she allows to flow to her feet when I bow before her charming person. I don't know if I shall see princess xxx during her passage, but I shall do my best to prolong my sojourn in Moscow until then. All the persons from your family become dearer to me day by day. If I must retire from the world scene one day, it will be, believe me, with a very lively interest that, at the base of my retreat, I will follow watchfully the pilgrimage of each of them across life's laughing or somber fields. In regard to retreat, I must say a word to you about myself: My new proprietor[9] has decided, I believe, to reconstruct the little pavilion[10] that I occupy; hence I am forced finally to take the initiative. Probably during the first days of May I must arrange for my definitive retreat, not without some admitted regret. Never has Moscow been so good to live in; I would even say that Moscow has never been so loveable to me! Never have so many fruitful matters been dangled here before serious minds! Good night to all that. Pardon if I present you with all the details about my indiginous person but it was you who asked for it.

I don't know whether you have been informed about the acquaintanceship that I made on one of these days with an eminent personage from the Church?[11] I found him to be infinitely more interesting than I supposed. Unfortunately he

is so obstructed by an irksome world that one is hardly able to see him in his natural state. Good day, princess. You see from the date of this letter that it was written on the day after the Feast of xxx. I passed the evening this day in the home of prince xxx. Will xxx graciously accept this homage of my sincere affections? I would like to know whether little Marie remembers me? I hope that prince xxx still wishes me well and that xxx does as well.

Princess, please accept the assurance of my sincerest devotion.

To Count Adolphe de Circourt, April 26 (1846)[1]

I thank you, sir, for your parcel and for your letter. The memory of our dead friend[2] is very dear to me, and your article responds perfectly to the wishes which we formed to see him honored not only in our country but in those in which he lived for so long. The editors of our journal will be charmed to give it a place in our so vividly felt pages, which express so well our own feelings. The exact knowledge of our country and the kindly tone which distinguishes your article are rare things among foreign writers who have done us the honor of speaking about us. But do you not find that the man whom we regret has grown well since he is no longer in this world? He was not at all appreciated while alive. One could say that one part of his person concealed the other part from us. He was not taken seriously until he was taken away from us. It is only at this hour when the emptiness which he left among us leads us back so often towards him that we begin to render him a late justice. Surrounded by his amiable gossip, by his bubbling agitation, we were not able to perceive the basic seriousness which was hiding behind all that. However also an existence given over to the practice of a thousand generous congenial feelings merited well that it be considered from all its facets. Undoubtedly today his qualities are exaggerated, just as once his faults were exaggerated, but it is always so that at this hour he has the end of his foot in history if not his complete foot.

What you say to me concerning the state of France does not surprise me in the least. I am not a partisan of your current regime,[3] but I admit to you that I absolutely am ignorant of this new character which you attribute to your society. What is this bastardly imperialism of which you speak? Is this the ambitious spirit of the imperial epoch or else its spirit of submission - that is what I am unable to decipher. Just as you, I think that the absolute abolishment of the aristocratic element was a real calamity for France and that a country which makes the claim of being a serious monarchy cannot dispense with that element.[4] A royalty placed at the pinnacle of society without intermediaries between itself and the nation is only logical in despotism; in the constitutional order of things it is nonsensical. This supreme grandeur must be tempered by an inferior grandeur, otherwise it will only wound the regards of the multitude, only bruise all vanities, all ambitions without being able to content them; it will excite all passions, all the impatience of the people and of individuals without having the means of calming them. It seems to me that the role of the aristocracy in a

constitutional regime is first of all to turn the view of the inferior classes away from the pomp of a monarchial power, which is always a little too lively, always a little too dazzling for them. I find that there is something singularly insolent and cynical in this nudity of a royalty stripped of aristocracy. That, in my opinion, is what explains most of the things which happen to you without excepting the assassination attempts which revolt humanity.

You are always curious about the movement of ideas in our country. What can I say to you about it? The national reactions still continues. If it sometimes happens that it becomes a little too passionate over its own creations, to take on airs of power, to make like a great lady, one should not hold too much of a grudge against it. It is appropriate for all reactions to be smitten with themselves, to have too robust a faith in their truth, to fall into all kinds of arrogance, and you know that contradiction on this terrain is just about impossible in our country. The indigenous idea, i.e., the idea exclusively such as it is, triumphs because there is truth and good at the basis of this idea, because the indigenous idea should naturally after this long submission to foreign ideas from which we emerge. Undoubtedly the day will come when a new combination of universal ideas with local ideas puts an end to its triumphs, but until then it must experience its success as well as the abuse which it causes.

Come to see us, Sir. You will judge things better when you will have observed them with your own eyes. There are traits in the current movement which I am not able to transmit to you and which characterize it perfectly. Don't think that I wish to speak about a political tendency; nothing of the sort. But you are aware that certain words in passing from hand to hand are sometimes subject to changes of sense. For example, nothing is more discreet than these wishes which we form in favor of a certain return to an imaginary past, but alongside this imaginary past we have a real past, and it is certain that a number of things from this real past may sound strangely in more than one ear, if one day in our day one were to reproduce them in our public places. The task is purely literary, but nothing is easier than to find in it, as one says in your country, a social character, nay even an even more pronounced character. Still, these are only studies, but studies made in the midst of society and which replenish a part of its existence, no matter how discolored they be. Another time perhaps we could talk more at your leisure. Meanwhile please believe that I will always find a real pleasure in satisfying as best I can the intelligent curiosity which we inspire in you. Please accept the assurance of my perfect esteem.

To Adolphe de Circourt, June 15 (1846)[1]

I just wrote to you, Sir, and I take up my pen again to beg you kindly to use your influence in seeing to the publication of an article by my friend Khomiakov; it has been translated by me and I wish to see it published in one of your periodicals.[2] You will receive the manuscript without delay from Mr. Melgunov[3] whom you know, I believe. I do not need to tell you the pleasure

which I found in talking with you again. The article deals with the opinion of foreigners about Russia. You know that I do not share the opinions of the author. But you are going to see that I tried to render his idea with all possible care. Perhaps I would have had more satisfaction in refuting it. But I think that there was no better way to make your own public appreciate the literary products of our soil other than handing them over the consummation of yours. The fact is that, although at this very hour we are very disposed to confide ourselves to our own judgment, the old habit of relating ourselves to those in your countries still continues to prevail today among us. You are so well initiated into our intimate life, you know our family secrets, so you will perfectly understand my thinking. There is no progress possible in our country, even at the present time and despite our many attempts at emancipation, except by calling upon the European tribunal. It is not that we do not basically in our innermost selves the germ of all imaginable development, but it is no less true that the initiative for our movement still belongs to foreign ideas just as the initiative has always belonged to them. A singular phenomenon of social dynamics, for which there is perhaps no example in the history of people! Note first of all that all our intellectuality is only the product of the religious principle. But this principle does not belong to any one people in particular. Hence it is a foreign principle to us just as it is in relationship to other people in the world.

One must add to that the fact that Christianity underwent national or local influences everywhere, whereas in our country it remained just as it was imparted from Byzantium, just as it was formulated one day by the force of circumstances, an important fact, which our church correctly glories in, but which also to no lesser extent characterizes an essential trait of our national physiognomy. It is under the inspiration of this unique principle that our society developed. At the moment when Peter the Great came to impose his reform on us, this development had attained its high point, but that was not a truly social development, it was an intimate fact, a thing from the internal force of conscience and of the family which naturally had to fade away insofar as the country grew politically. So, that entire domestic regime applied to the government of the state was already falling in ruins, when a strong arm launched us on the career of universal progress. I know very well that today people claim to prove that Peter the Great encountered obstinate resistance in the national sentiment, over which he triumphed, they say, only by spilling waves of blood: Unfortunately history forgot to consign this superb struggle of the nation with its prince to its annals.

Moreover, what, I ask you, could have impeded the country from going backwards after the death of Peter the Great to it ancient customs, to its ancient institutions? So what could have stopped the national feeling from asserting itself in all its energy, in all its truth, under the two regimes which followed that of the reformer? Certainly not Menshikov,[4] who governed Russia under Catherine I, nor the young Peter II, guided by the Dolgorukis, residing in the ancient metropole of Russia, source and meeting place for all our national

prejudices[5] - they never could have dreamt of opposing a national reaction, if such a fantasy had come to the country. After the horrible episode of Biron[6] came the reign of Elizabeth, well known for its Russian tendencies, its sweetness and its glory.[7] It is useless to speak about this in the case of Catherine II, so perfectly national that perhaps never does one witness a nation identified with its government to the point which the Russian nation was during those days of triumph and prosperity.[8] So it is evident that the reform of Peter the Great was accepted with good grace by us. The weak resistance which it met in one fraction of society was only a whim of a party directed against the reformer's personality and in no way an opposition directed against the idea which he wished to see triumph. Proof for this is the fact that this opposition dates back to the first days of his regime, consequently back to a time much before his innovations. This facility of submitting to impulses imprinted on us, be it from outside or from our masters, to bow to ideas imposed upon us, is hence an essential trait of our temperament, whether it's native or acquired is irrelevant. One must neither blush nor deny it; one must try to explain it, and not by means of some ethnographic theory or other so much à la mode in our day, but rather one must explain it very simply by a frank and courageous conception of our history. I feel like telling you all my thinking about this. I will not be long.

I just observed that we are the product of the religious principle and that is perfectly true, but that is not all. One must not forget that this principle is only truly productive when it is independent of temporal power, when the place from which it exercises its influence on people is situated in a region inaccessible to the powers of this world. Such was the case in Egypt, in India, in all the eastern countries and finally in Roman Europe. Unfortunately, it was not so in our country. Despite the profound respect which our princes had for the clergy and for the dogmas of Christianity, spiritual power was far from enjoying the fullness of its rights in our country. One must go back to the very origin of the constitution of our Church in order to take this fact into account. All the world knows that the acceptance of Christianity by Constantine the Great as the state religion was an immense political development. But people don't have an exact idea formed at all of the influence which this event excited on the religion itself.

No doubt the character which Constantine imprinted upon the Church would not have been more fatal than favorable had Constantine not decided at the same time to transport the seat of government to the new Rome. In this way the Church was in a great part of the world freed from the tutelage of the temporal power so that the church could march all alone towards its destiny. One must recall that the Roman government was no longer during this epoch the republican monarchy of the Caesars, but rather the oriental despotism inaugurated by Diocletian and consolidated by Constantine. Hence the emperors soon became masters of the spiritual as well as of the temporal. They considered themselves to be like external and universal bishops. They placed their thrones in the sanctuaries. They presided over the church councils. They called themselves

apostolic, and finally as the historian Socrates[9] informs us, *they render themselves masters of religious affairs and sovereignly took command of the great councils*. St. Athanasius[10] reports that Constance said to the bishops reunited around him, *what I wish should be regarded as the law of the Church.* And you undoubtedly know that Theodosius the Great[11] was greeted with the title of pontifical sovereign at the council of Constantinople. Such was the march of the imperial power during the first centuries of the Church.

But at the same time and in the face of these encroachments of the emperors upon the spiritual we see the western Church, thanks to her remoteness from the center of the empire, being constituted in a perfectly independent way, her bishops extending their authority even over the temporal, the Roman patriarch profiting from the prestige attached to the great name of Rome and to the blood of the martyrs which was imbued in the soil of the eternal city. Due to the heritage of the prince of the apostles, due to the memory of another great apostle, due to the primacy which was generally bestowed upon it and especially due to the need which Christian humanity felt for a center and for a symbol of unity, the Roman patriarch lost little by little to this supreme grandeur which was destined one day to struggle with the empire and triumph over it. This triumph, I know, found little approval among your philosophical minds. The evil which resulted from it for society was visible, the good escaped them. But as for us others, witnesses disinterested in the cause, we can judge it better than you; faithful continuation of Byzantium, we know what we are in for in the case of a Church delivered over to the hands of the powers of this world. I just named Theodosius the Great. Very well, as for this same Theodosius treated as sovereign pontiff in Constantinople, you know how Saint Ambrose[12] treated him in Milan. Not content with forbidding him entry into the church, he even had the imperial throne taken out of the sanctuary.

Nothing, I find, describes better the character of the two Churches. On the one hand, a clergy animated with a profound sense of independence, aspiring to erect the empire of the mind and of thought beyond that of force and of earthly interest, and, on the other hand, a Church Herself submitted to material power and tending to elevate it into a kind of Christian Caliphate. There you have the heritage which we received from Byzantium with the dogmatic integrity and the primitive purity. It is true that this purity is an immense good, the preservation of which we should consider as a favor from heaven accorded to our unrecognized merits and one which should perfectly console us for that which we otherwise lack in our spiritual regime. But at the same time one could not deny the fact that the religious system of the West was much more favorable to the social development of the people than that which fell to our lot.

Don't forget that in our country there was nothing at all of any other moral principle or other national principle besides the religious idea. Hence to this idea alone the nation owes, in a way, all its historical and social education and that everything must be attributed to it in our country, the good and the bad.

To return to our subject, it is evident that this docility at submitting to different directions which are imprinted on us is partially the effect of a religious system deprived of liberty, where moral thinking preserved only the appearance of its dignity, where moral thinking was honored only on condition of remaining quiet, where moral thinking exerted authority only insofar as it was accorded it by the political power, and finally where moral thinking is unceasingly compromised in its ministers, in its action and in its spirit. I don't know if you will share my opinion, but it seems to me that all our history is explained very well by the sole religious factor which dominates it. See for yourself: A simple, easy-going people, a people whose first steps were marked by this famous abdication in favor of a foreign race, an abdication so näively recounted by our annalists, this people, I say, embraces the sublime beliefs of the Bible in their primitive expression such as they were conceived by the majority of the faithful before the movement of Christian society had imprinted upon them the social character, the germs of which were contained in the sublime beliefs, but which were destined to become manifest only later and during a given epoch. Hence it is clear that the moral idea of Christianity should produce on this people only its most direct effect, to make it prefer the ascetic element to the exclusion of all other principles which are contained there, principles of development, progress and future.

Emanated from supreme reason Christian dogma undoubtedly could neither develop itself or perfect itself, but it is susceptible to a host of applications, provoked by the life of nations and by the diverse needs created by it. All the great phenomena, all the immense results which the life of western people, combined with Christianity, have accomplished are known. The fact is that this life, itself filled with all kinds of fruitful elements, was not at all petrified by a narrow spirituality. This life found protection, sympathy and liberty, whereas life in our country only encountered a rigorous monasticism and submission to the authority of the prince. Hence we marched from abdication to abdication.[14] Our entire social evolution is only a series of facts of this nature. You know our history too well for me to need to enumerate details. Suffice it for me to point out the immense fact of the gradual enserfment of our rural population, which resumes, in a way, the entire spirit of our history, which forms all the philosophy, which is the rigorous and logical deduction of it. Slavery had everywhere the same origin, namely conquest; in our country nothing of the sort, it is one part of the nation which one fine day found itself the slave of the other by the very nature of things, by the effect of an imperial need of the country, by the natural bent of society, without abuses from one part without complaints from the other.

Notice that this unique work was achieved during the most beautiful days of our Church, during the epoch of its greatest power, during the period of the patriarchate, a memorable period in which for an instant was seen a bishop sharing the throne with the prince.[15] Amid this social development, unique in the history of the world, where all flows from the principle of subjection of the

individual and of thought, where all is absorbed in the idea of power, how can you expect that the national intelligence could manage to shake off the yoke of a civilization imposed by this power itself? Impossible. So the moment of our emancipation is still far from us. All the work of the new school will serve for nothing so long as we have not arrived at seeing things from our past in their true light. Science is powerful in our day undoubtedly and the destiny of society depends upon it in great part, but science can exert its influence on people only on the condition of being as disinterested, as impersonal in the order of social ideas as it is in the sphere of positive thought. It is only then that its formulae and its theories can come to explain the laws of society, to act upon society the way theories act in the study of nature, to express its laws, to borrow from it its power and to react upon society. It don't doubt that the time will come when it will be given to us to conceive of our past in such a way as to be able to extract from it a thousand fertile results, a crowd of useful lessons, but until then we must content ourselves with the simple appreciation of the facts, without being too preoccupied with what they can contain of matter or of substance for the edification of our future destiny.

The epoch of our genuine emancipation from the influence of foreign ideas will only date from the day when we perfectly understand the roads traveled by us, when the confession of all the faults of our past life will escape from our lips despite ourselves, when the cry of repentence and of sorrow will become heard from the depths of our souls. Then we shall naturally take our place among people destined to figure in humanity, not only as battering rams or as a club, but also as ideas. Perhaps even that moment is not so far away from us as I first thought, for at the very heart of this new school which claims to lead us back to an imaginary past more than one lucid mind, more than one sincere soul have already been led to admit to the sins of our fathers. The courageous study of our history will necessarily lead us to unanticipated revelations which will shed a new light upon our inner life and inundate our entire being with their light. Nothing is more fortunate than the direction which minds have taken in our day. A mass of considerable facts have been exhumed from oblivion, the most interesting epochs of our history have undergone a complete reconstruction. And at the moment when I write these lines more than one important work, they say, is on the point of seeing the light of day.

The opinion opposed to that of the national school, in its turn obliged to give itself over to these serious studies on historical matters, though departing from a different point of view, has come to results no less unexpected. One could not deny that the intrepitude with which the two opinions accost the most interesting questions of our history does honor to our times and allows one to predict a time when our tongues more unbound and our minds more free will no longer be enchained in the bowels of a hypocritical reticence. Comparison of our historical life with that of other people, so often reproduced in our days, shows us each day more of how we are different from them. So we will end by understanding that if it is truly permissible for a people to separate themselves voluntarily from the rest of the world, if one really forms a part of intelligent humanity when one

has furnished to humanity only a geographical, more or less vast map. If I have contributed my part in putting into focus the two ideas which today preoccupy our serious minds, I am happy for it, and you can see that I continue to speak my mind frankly every time that I have the opportunity. At the moment when so many expiring or reviving nationalities influence serious minds, the best way, I think, of elucidating one's country is to show it to everyone, strangers and native, such as the country appears to ourselves in our moments of sincerity. Everyone is free to rectify our errors, if we are mistaken.

I promised to be brief. I don't know if I kept my word, but what I know very well is that if I believed in the pleasure that I experience in talking over our affairs with you then you would experience an interminable letter - I think you don't doubt my perfect and sincere devotion.

Letter to Count Circourt, June 15 (1846)[1]

I've just written to you, sir, but I take up my pen once again, to ask you to consent giving your support to the printing of an article, translated by me, and written by our friend Khomiakov, who would like to see it printed in one of your periodicals.[2] You'll receive the article at once from Mr. Melgunov,[3] whom I believe you know. I don't have to tell you about the pleasure that I get in talking with you again. The article deals with the opinion of foreigners about Russia. You know that I don't share the same opinions as the author. However, you'll see that I tried to express his ideas with all the care imaginable. Perhaps, I would have got more satisfaction in refuting it, but I thought that the best way of making our literary products appreciated by our public was to turn them over the the great literary consumption in the European world. No matter how disposed we already are now to trust in our own judgement, the old habit of relating our judgement to that of your public still prevails among us. You who are so well acquainted with our inner life, you who knows our family secrets, understands our thoughts perfectly. In my opinion, progress is still impossible in our country, without appeal to the European tribunal. It's not that we don't possess the seeds of all possible development in our own mature foundations, but it's nonetheless certain that the initiative for our development still belongs to foreign ideas, and, I'll add, that it has belonged to them at all times: a curious, dynamic development without examples in the history of mankind. You realize that I am not only referring to a fairly recent epoch, but to our total advance throughout the centuries.

First, all our intellectual activity is evidently a fruit of the religious principle. But, this principle doesn't belong to any people in particular: It is, then, a foreign principle to us, just as to other people in the world. But everywhere it has undergone national or local influences, whereas in our country the Christian idea remained just as it was imported from Byzantium, i.e., just as the idea was formulated one day by the force of circumstances, it's an important fact which our Church rightly boasts about, but which nonetheless does not specify the

particular nature of our national character. It's under the influence of this unique idea that our society developed. When Peter the Great came to impose his reform upon us, this development had attained its zenith. But there was really no social development in it, this was an intimate fact, a factor of the inner moral consciousness, a family affair, which should have necessarily started to fade away as the country grew politically. Moreover, this whole domestic regime, applied to the State, fell in ruins when a strong arm pushed us along the road of universal progress. I realize that today men would like to convince us that among his people Peter the Great found obstinate resistance, over which he triumphed, they say, only by waves of blood. Unfortunately, history hasn't recorded this superb fight of the nation against its Prince. Moreover, nothing, after the death of Peter, prevented the country from returning to these ancient customs, and these ancient institutions. Who then could have prevented national feeling from manifesting itself energetically under the two reigns which followed that of the reformer? Certainly, neither Menshikov, who governed Russia under Catherine I, nor young Peter II, directed by the Dolgorukis, residing in the ancient metropolis of Russia, hearth and center of all our popular prejudices, could have ever dreamed of opposing a national reaction, if such a fancy were to have struck the nation.

After the terrible episode of Biron comes the reign of Elizabeth, well known for her Russian tendencies, her sweetness and her glory. There is no need to speak about the reign of Catherine II, which was so perfectly national, that perhaps never was a nation identified with its government as much as the Russian nation was in its time of triumphs and prosperity. It is evident that we willingly accepted the reform of Peter the Great. The feeble resistance which he encountered in one faction of the Russian people was only a caprice of one party against his person and in no way an earnest opposition against the idea which he wanted to triumph. This facility at submitting to influences conveyed to us and at bowing to ideas imposed on us, be they from the outside or from our masters, is thus an essential trait of our temperament, whether it's native or acquired, makes no difference. We must not be ashamed of it, nor deny it, we must seek to explain it to ourselves, and not by some kind of ethnographic theory which is very fashionable today, but very simply by a frank and sincere understanding of our history. I would like to communicate to you all my thoughts on this matter. I'll not be long.

I've just made the observation that we are the product of the religious principle, and that's certain, but it's not all. We mustn't forget that this principle is fertile only when it is perfectly independent of temporal power, only when the place from which it exercises its action on people is situated in a region inaccessible to the secular powers. So it was in ancient Egypt, in the entire Orient, especially in India, and finally in western Europe. Unfortunately it was different in our country. Despite the profound veneration that our princes had for the clergy and the dogmas of Christianity in our country, spiritual power was far from enjoying the fullness of its natural rights in society. In order to account for this fact, we must go back to the very origin of our Church's structure, that

is, to Constantine the Great. Everyone knows that the acceptance of Christianity as the state religion by this prince was an immense political event, but it seems to me that men do not generally have an exact idea of the influence which this acceptance exercised on religion itself. No doubt, the character imparted to the church by this revolution would probably have been more fatal than favorable, if Constantine had not luckily dared to transport the seat of government to the new *Rome*, which delivered the ancient Rome from the troublesome presence of the sovereign. At this epoch, Roman government was no longer the republican monarchy of the first Caesars, it was the oriental despotism inaugurated by Diocletian and consolidated by Constantine.

The emperors thus soon became the sovereign masters of the spiritual as well as the temporal. They considered themselves as exterior and universal bishops; they placed their thrones in the sanctuary; they presided over the assemblies of the church; they called themselves apostolic; and finally, as the historian Socrates informs us, *they rendered themselves the masters of religious affairs and had sovereign command over the greatest councils*. Saint Athanasius tells us that Constance said to the bishops reunited around him: *what I will, must be regarded as the law of the church,* and you know, without a doubt, that Theodosius the Great was hailed with the title of sovereign pontiff at the council of Constantinople. This was the march of imperial power during the first centuries of the church. But at the same time and in the face of these encroachments is the emperors over the spiritual order, the western church, Roman church, thanks to its distance from the seat of the empire, is seen forming itself in an independent manner, its bishops extend their authority even over the temporal. Profiting from the prestige attached to its great name, by the blood of martyrs with which the soil of the eternal city was impregnated, by the heritage of the prince of the apostles, by the memory of another great apostle, and especially by the need which Christian humanity experienced for a center and for a symbol of unity, the Roman patriarch is seen rising, little by little, to this supreme position of power, which one day was destined to come in conflict with the empire and to triumph over it. This triumph, I know, was approved by few of your philosophic minds, but we others, disinterested witnesses in the case, can appreciate it better than you; faithful disciples of Byzantium, we know better what it means for a spiritual power to be delivered over to the hands of secular power.

A moment before I referred to Theodosius the Great. Well, you know how this same Theodosius, whom they treated as sovereign pontiff at Constantinople, was harshly treated by St. Ambrose at Milan, and it must be added that the latter, not content with forbidding him entry into the church, also had the imperial throne taken out of the sanctuary. Nothing better describes, I find, the character of the two churches. On the one hand, animated with a profound sense of independence, a clergy aspiring to erect the spiritual power over that of force; on the other hand, subjected to the physical power, a church tending to become a kind of Christian Caliphat. There then is the heritage which we received from Byzantium, along with the integrity of dogma and its primitive purity. This

purity, without a doubt, is an immense good, and it should console us for what is moreover lacking in our spiritual system, but since here our only concern is our social development, you'll agree that the western religious system was very much more favorable to a development of this nature, than what fell to us as our lot. One thing must always be remembered, and that is that there was in our society no moral principle other than the religious idea: it's then to the religious idea alone that our nation owes its historic education, everything in our land ought to be attributed to it, the good as well as the bad. But to return to our subject, it's evident that this docility in submitting ourselves to the different movements imposed on us, is a necessary consequence of a religious system devoid of liberty, in which moral thought has preserved only the appearance of dignity, and is honored only on condition that it is maintained tranquilly; in which a system moral thought exercised only as much authority as it was accorded by political power, and finally in which the ministers of moral thought are unceasingly compromised in movement and in spirit.

I don't know if you'll agree with me, but it seems to me that all our history can be explained very effectively in this way. A good-natured and simple-souled people, whose first steps on the social scene were marked by this famous abdication in favor of a foreign people, so naively related by our annalists - this people, I say, embraced the sublime teachings of the Bible in their original form, i.e., before the movement of Christian society had on them imparted social character, now the germ of social character was there, but it would and could only manifest itself at a given epoch. It's clear that the moral idea of Christendom had to have only its most immediate effect on this people, by making the ascetic element prevail there, to the exclusion of all other principles which are contained in Christendom principles of development, progress and future. The Christian dogma, emanated from supreme reason, can neither be developed nor perfected, but it's susceptible to many applications based on the life of nations. Men know that all the great phenomena, all the immense results which the life of western people engendered, were combined with Christendom. But that's because this life, itself filled with all kinds of fertile elements, was not petrified by a narrow spiritualism, it's because this life found protection, sympathy, liberty there, where life in our land met only monastic rigor and subjection to the interests of the prince. We proceeded then from abdication to abdication. All our social evolution is but a series of such typical facts.

You know our history well, without my having to enumerate it for you: it's enough for me to signal out the immense fact of the gradual enslavement of our rural population, which in some way summarized the whole spirit of our history (which is only a rigorous and logical result of our history). Everywhere slavery had the very same origin: conquest. Not so in our country. One fine day one part of the nation found itself the slave of the other, by the very nature of things, by the effect of an imperious need in the country, by the inevitable march of society, without abuse, on the one hand, without protest, on the other. Note that this iniquitous work was completed during the epoch of the church's greatest power, during the period of Patriarchate, a memorable period in which for a

moment men saw the chief of the church share the throne with the prince. Amid this social development, unique in the history of the world, in which everything tends in principle towards the subjection of the individual and thought, how could you expect that spirit could come to throw off the yoke of your civilization, your enlightenment, your authority? Impossible. The moment of our emancipation is then still far away from us. All the work of the new school will accomplish nothing, so long as our retrospective point of view is not completely modified. Science is powerful in our day, without a doubt; the destinies of society are dependent in great part on science, but science cannot exercise its action on the people, except on the condition of its being just as impartial, just as impersonal in the order of social ideas, as it is in the sphere of pure thought. It is only thus that the formulae, and theories of science can come to an explanation of social laws and act on society, just as science attains an explanation of its laws in the study of nature and reacts on nature.

Doubtless, time will come when we will be given the possibility of understanding our past in a way so as to be able to draw fertile results from it for our future, but until that time we must be content with the simple appreciation of the facts, without preoccupying ourselves too much with their meaning or substance for the edification of our future destinies. The epoch of our genuine deliverance from the influence of foreign ideas will come only on the day when we perfectly understand the roads which we traveled over, when the confession of all our past errors and faults will escape from our lips despite ourselves, when from the depths of our nature will be heard the cry of repentence and sorrow, whose resonance will fill the earth. Then we will naturally take our place among the peoples destined to act among humanity not only as battering ram or club, but also as ideas. And don't go believing that we have long to wait for this moment. At the very bosom of this new school which claims to re-establish the past, more than one lucid spirit, more than one sincere soul has already been guided to admit the sins of our fathers. The courageous study of our history will lead us necessarily to unexpected revelations, which will throw a new light on our earlier life, people will finally learn to know not what we possessed, but what we lacked; not what must be re-established from the past, but what must be done away with.

There's nothing more fortunate than the movement which our minds have taken in our day. A considerable mass of facts has been exhumed from oblivion; the most interesting epochs of our history have undergone a complete reconstruction; and at the moment in which I write to you, an important work is on the point of seeing light of day. The school of thought opposed to the national school, must also devote itself to earnest studies on historical matters, though it starts from a different point of view, it arrives at nonetheless unforeseen results. It could not be denied that the courage with which the two schools of thought approach these matters does honor to our times, and allows us to look forward to those times in which our tongues will be less tied and our intellects freer, so that we will no longer be enchained by the fetters of eternal and hypocritical reticence. The comparison of our historic life with that of other

people, so often represented in our days, shows us step by step how much we differ from other people. Later, we'll know if it's permissible for a people to separate themselves thus from the rest of the world, if men really form a part of historic humanity, when they have nothing more to furnish historic humanity than a few pages of geography. For my part, if I have contributed in bringing face-to-face the two ideas which divide our earnest minds today, then I'm happy about it, and you can see that I always continue to express my thought on my country frankly. At the moment in which expiring and renascent nationalities preoccupy so many intellectuals, it seems to me that the best way of enlightening one's country concerning its own nationality is to show it to everyone, foreigner and native, such as our nationality appears to us ourselves. Everyone is free to rectify our errors, if we have been mistaken.

I promised you to be brief. I don't know if I have kept my word, but what I know surely is that if I hardly believed in the pleasure that I find in conversing with you about our affairs, you would undergo an interminable letter.

To George Samarin, Jan. 29 (1847)[1]

Your letter, dear Mr. Samarin, touched me deeply. I tell you truly, you have a heart as good as you mind. Perhaps some people will find the praise exaggerated, but these will unquestionably not be those who wish you the most good. Man is made all of one piece more than one thinks. So, from the very first days when I learned to know you, my opinion was formed in your regard and it is the nobility of your feelings as much as the distinction of your mind which attracted me to you. There are, moreover, so many things which are only perceived by the heart's eye, that one could never appreciate perfectly the measure of our intelligence if one does not consider one complete being at the same time.

I am delighted to have found the opportunity of expressing to you what I think about you and it is sweet to imagine that I perhaps have contributed in my humble way to the development of the best powers of your nature. Dear Mr. Samarin, please accept this heritage from a man whose feelings, I dare say, were not always sterile. If my tired existence should soon become terminated, nothing will sweeten it as much the last days of my life as the memory of affections accorded me by some young hearts, warmed in return for the warmth which I felt for them. I count you among those hearts. I infinitely regret that upon your departure you found me in one of my worst moments and I trust that this impression does not leave any traces upon your prosperous existence. By a singular arrangement of life it happened that I found myself in contradiction with things and men surrounding me almost upon leaving childhood behind. My nervous constitution naturally was bound to be felt by me and at the age at which I am, nothing remains for me to do about it other than accept with resignation the destiny fallen to me. Fortunately human life does not end on the day of death, it begins again the next day. Whether this moment is near or not for me, let me

nourish the hope that you will not preserve any less until then the feelings which you just expressed to me. Though we were not always of the same opinion on many things, perhaps we shall find one day that the divergence of my opinions was not as profound as we thought it to be. I love my country in my way, that's all. More than I could tell you, it cost me to pass for an unfaithful Russian. Enough of sacrifices. Now that my task if fulfilled and my chalice is emptied, as I have said almost all that I had to say, nothing any longer hinders me from giving myself over with reservation to this innate inclination for my fatherland that I have repressed too long in my breast. The truth is that like so many others before me and greater than I, I thought that in finding ourselves in the presence of an immense civilization, product of all previous centuries and of a thousand efforts of humanity, we had nothing better to do than to seek to appropriate to ourselves this civilization in all imaginable ways. I thought that in the situation which was created for us by the very force of things we could no longer continue our old history step by step, won over as we irrevocably were by this new history of humankind which precipitated it towards all kinds of dénouements. Perhaps it was a mistake, but a very natural mistake, you must agree. No matter what, some new studies and some new pieces of research have made known to us a multitude of things unknown before, and it has become evident at this hour that we resemble the rest of the world too little to be able to attain some serious result in taking a common route with the rest of the world. Hence if we have in effect deviated from our natural march, one must above all try to rediscover it in every way possible, if it can be done, that is certain. But once this retrogression has been done, this work accomplished, then what must one do then that is the question. Meanwhile let us all work such as we are in good faith, each in his own way towards this interesting research. To do that there is, I find, no need at all to abjure our convictions; it is enough to recognize the historical importance of our ancestors and from that to arrive at a lucid and sincere appreciation of our present state. Whether one approves of the march which we followed in days of yore or not, it is always so that we must one day return to a certain point, for it is clear that our derailment did not at all succeed for us in all things. After all, it is the way to stay cowering on one's opinions amid this frightening steeplechase which carries us towards some great unknown future! Aren't all people extending their hands out today? Very well, may opinions do the same without being confounded, without becoming debased, but to extend themselves and to effect a rapprochement on the neutral terrain of love and of charity, just as the nationalities do, once enemies towards one another, today pacific rivals in research of the greatest welfare possible in this world. Isn't the epoch of the railroad also that of all kinds of rapprochements? At the moment when time and space are going to be abolished, when all the enclosures of the world are going to be torn down, how can you expect that ideas would not also change a little in appearance and allure? I will be delighted to speak with you again about all that, but I must warn you that your friends wish that you use the honored idiom of the West. As for me, as you know, I am not one of those who considers the usage of a language a privileged organ of civilization, as a

crime against our own nationality provided that one is understood, which is not always the case even in the language of the country, no matter.

Here is the new volume of Gogol[2] which falls to us from the skies. You could figure out for yourself the emotion which it generated among us. The strange phenomenon which this extraordinary man offers us is certainly very full of instructions, but who knows if we will be able to profit from it! An eminent writer, while being the expression of his epoch, outdoes it always a little; this personal infatuation of talent, enveloped in religion, is perfectly explicable in my opinion by the general phenomenon of the times in which we live, a singular mix of restless religiosity and of all sorts of pride. It is no less very curious to observe the influence which general tendencies exert upon the minds of the elite. Also I am far from sharing the public rancor against our little great man whose principal crime is basically only to have offended some people filled with self-love who believe themselves to be better sheltered under their tent than they really are. So where, I ask you, has one ever seen a poet who was a profound thinker? Viazemskii writes to me that he is going to compose an article on the new book.[3] I think that it will be like my opinion. I am impatient to know yours.

Good day, dear Mr. Samarin. You are greeted from all parts and in all ways without even speaking about me who greets you in the most cordial way in the world.

Letter to P. A. Viazemskii, April 29 (1847)[1]

Thank you, my dear Prince, for your kind letter. We shall try to arrange the affair of K.[2] ourselves; but we are nevertheless grateful to you for your interest in this matter. I find myself in complete disagreement with your opinion of our life here, although you are right about many things. That we are intelligent there can be no doubt; but that our intelligence is quite useless, with that I cannot agree. Must one be practical in order to practice something? Of course, it's possible to do both; but this does not mean that an idea which is yet to find expression in reality could not be something very sensible. The time will come, and it will manifest itself in that sphere as well. Do people inhabit only departments and offices? You will say that our ideas not only don't manifest themselves in reality but are not even put down on paper. But what are we to do? Who knows, we may be bad at reading and writing. But if you could only hear our discussions! There is not a single contemporary or non-contemporary question that we have not resolved, and all to the honor and glory of Holy Russia. Believe me, our discussions contain much sense. The world will throw up its hands when all this will be seen in the light of day. But let us talk about a subject that interests both of us.

I hear that among you Gogol's book[3] has been greeted with much pleasure; among us, on the contrary, it has provoked great displeasure. I believe this is due to our being more partial to the author. He somewhat deceived us, that's

why we are angry with him. As for me, I believe that what is most interesting here is not Gogol himself, but rather that which has made him the figure we see before us now. In our arrogant age which pompous with popular pride, how can a talented writer surrounded by clouds of incense not give himself airs, how can his head not spin? It's simply impossible. We are now so pleased with everything that is native and particular to us, we are so happy with our past, so content with our present, we boast so much of our future that the feeling of universal self-satisfaction is unwittingly applied to the individuals among us. If the Russian people is superior to all the other peoples in the world, then it follows that every talented Russian is superior to all the talented individuals among other peoples. Among those peoples for whom national self-conceit is an ancient tradition, where, so to speak, it has willy-nilly emerged from historical events, where it is in the blood, where it is something trivial, there, by virtue of this fact, it belongs to the multitude and can have no effect on an elevated mind, among us, on the other hand, this weakness has suddenly manifested itself contrary to our whole existence, all our centuries-old ideas and traditions, so that it took everyone by surprise, the intelligent and the unintelligent: are we then to wonder that even men who have been endowed with extraordinary gifts are intoxicated by it! We need only look around ourselves to see at once that this national conceit, which previously was alien to us, has suddenly perverted our best minds; how great the ecstasy of self-satisfaction in which they have been drowning since they performed their imaginary feat, since they discovered their new world of spirit and intelligence! It seems that the precepts of wise antiquity were not carved deeply in our souls; was it so long ago that, obeying the arbitrary will of a great man, we went against them in front of the entire world, and now we contravene them again, obeying some sort of national feeling which we have received God knows from where!

The flaws of Gogol's book belong not to him but to those who madly praise him, who worship him as the supreme manifestation of the original Russian mind, who await from him some sort of transformation of Russian letters, who ascribe to him a significance almost on a world scale, who, finally, have foisted on him an arrogant patriotism foreign to him with which they themselves are infected, thus confronting him with an insoluble problem, the impossible problem of reconciling good and evil: whereas its merits belong to him. His humility, to the extent that it may be found in the book, is the fruit of the author's new outlook; the pride that he displays was inculcated in him by his friends. He says this himself in his letter to Prince Lvov which he wrote in connection with this book.[4] Of course he was not born totally without pride, but nevertheless the main damage was done by his admirers. I refer in particular to his admirers in Moscow. And do you know where Moscow's habit of unquestioningly worshipping talented writers comes from? It is due to the desire we feel for a writer whom we could rank with all the giants of the human spirit, with Homer, Dante, Shakespeare and whom we could place above all the other writers of the past and present. This may be strange, but it's true. I know these

admirers well, I love and respect them, they are intelligent and worthy people; but they feel the overwhelming need to raise our modest, pious Russia above all the peoples in the world, they have decided at all costs to convince themselves and everyone else that we are destined to be in some sense the teachers of all the peoples. They happened to come across a little teacher of this kind, and they repeated this to him in a variety of voices, speaking aloud and whispering in his ear; and he, as an ingenuous, trusting poet, believed them. Fortunately for him and for Russian literature there lay hidden within him, as I have said above, the germ of that very pride which their laudations were meant to stimulate in him. He was satiated by their praises; but he did not feel the least respect for these people. This may be seen in his book and is reflected in his conversations in every word. Owing to this there appeared in him an anxious feeling towards himself which was at first reinforced by his morbid disposition and then by the new outlook he had adopted, perhaps as a means of escaping the melancholy that afflicted him and the painful, unrealisable task he had been set by the whims of the modern world. There can be no doubt that if these whims had not distracted him, if he had continued to follow his own path, he would have achieved wonderful things; but now God knows where his friends will lead him and how he will endure the burden of their arrogant expectations, irrational suggestions and immoderate praise!

Some among us in Moscow, by the way, imagine that he owes his new outlook to the so-called West, the land where he is currently residing, and to the Jesuits. Our unstraightforward friend[5] dwells on this felicitous thought in the 'Moscow Gazette' and in his next letter he will probably develop it further with his customary ingenuity. But Jesuitism as it is understood by these gentlemen has existed in the heart of man since the dawn of humanity; we need not look for it abroad; we can find it around us and even in those very people who reproach poor Gogol with it. It consists of the practice of employing every possible means to achieve one's goal, which is something that is common everywhere. To do that it is unnecessary to be not only a Jesuit, but even to believe in God; one only needs to become persuaded that one must become known as a good Christian or an honest man or something else of the kind. There is nothing like this in Gogol. He is too conceited, too disinterested, too candid, candid sometimes to the extent of being cynical, in a word, he is too artless to be a Jesuit. Some of his critics are particularly distinguished by their artfulness, their ability to profit from everything that falls into their hands, and in this sense they are truly jesuitical. He is nothing else but a talented writer who has been praised to excess, who has turned in a new direction and does not know how to come to terms with it. But he is still the same man we knew before and even in that morbid state of body and soul in which he currently finds himself he is still a hundred times greater than all his critics - and when he will be moved to do so, he will crush them with one word and scatter them like useless weeds.

These lines were written before I received your brochure;[6] since then I have been ill and unable to write. I thank you for sending it. I shall not change my

letter; I will only tell you in a couple of words as well as I can my opinion of your article. You probably know that it has been greeted here with tremendous anger. I of course don't share this anger. I am certain that if you forbore to demonstrate all the flaws in the book, this was because they did not concern you, for they had been pointed out my many others. It seems to me that above all you wished to demonstrate its importance from the point of view of morality and of the inevitability of the revolution that took place in the ideas of the author, and this, in my opinion, you did admirably. Whatever may now be said about your article, it will remain in the memory of reading and thinking people as the most honest word said about that book. Everything that had been said about it by others is filled with a strange anger against the author. It's as if he cannot be forgiven because, after having entertained us for so long with his intelligent *wit* he had taken it into his head to speak to us without laughing, because he had experienced what every day happens in ordinary life to people who are not as famous and because he dared to inform us about this as is the age-old want of writers who entertain the notion of their own importance. They forget that a writer, and one who is so well-known, is not a private individual, and it would be impossible and incorrect for him to conceal his new, intimate feelings; that he belongs to the people to whom he has dedicated the gift he had received from above not only with his writings, but with his very soul; they forget that despite some poor and even sinful pages, his books contain pages of amazing beauty, full of infinite truth, such pages that, when reading them, one feels proud that one speaks the language in which these things are said. Only you have shown love towards the book and its author: I thank you! Day after day the source of love among us is running more and more dry, at least in the world of bookmen: and so, I thank you once again! I am overcome by an ineffable sadness when I see all this spite directed at a beloved writer who has given us so much tearful happiness, a spite felt because he has ceased entertaining us and, with a feeling of sorrow and conviction, is making a confession before us and is attempting, as far as this is in his power, to tell us something instructive and good.

Much of what I wanted to say on this subject you have already said, and incomparably better than I should have been able to say, particularly in a language of which I have such an indifferent command; but it seems to me that you lost sight of one point, to which I alluded in my first lines, namely: the arrogant tone of these letters. I have already explained to whose influence I ascribe it; but nevertheless, Gogol himself cannot be completely acquitted of it, particularly in view of the spiritual strivings manifested in his book. I believe this is a matter of great importance. We have always been quiet of mind and humble of character; this is how we were raised by our Church, our only teacher. Woe to us if we prove ourselves unfaithful to her wise teaching! We owe this teaching our best national traits, our grandeur and everything that distinguishes us from other peoples and is shaping our destiny. Unfortunately, the new orientation of our best minds inclines precisely in that direction, and one cannot but admit that our dear Gogol, the very one who had shown us our sinful side in such harsh language, has succumbed to this influence. Our path is not

the one along which other peoples march; eventually we shall of course achieve the fountainhead of good, the source of humanity; and perhaps, guided by our holy faith, we shall be the first to glimpse the goal that God has foreordained for mankind; but until now we have contributed little to the general cause of humanity and the meaning of our purpose in the world still lies so deeply hidden in the bosom of Providence that it would be madness for us to praise ourselves before our elder brothers. They are not better than we; but they are more experienced . Your busy life in Petersburg has deafened you; you don't hear everything that is taking place in the land of Russia. Listen to our voices: they will reveal marvelous things to you. In the first half of your article you said a few wise words about our newly invented national spirit; but you said nothing about how we unwittingly strive to pervert our national character. Think about that. You will not believe the extent to which people in our country have changed since they shrouded themselves in this national pride, which was unknown to our God-loving fathers. This is what struck me most in Gogol's book and what I think you didn't notice. In everything else I'm in agreement with you. Remember me to Tiutchev,[7] and my heart-felt compliments to the Princess; a good handshake to your son.

Basmannaia. 29 April 1847

To F. I. T. (Fedor Ivanovich Tiutchev) May 10, (1847)[1]

I am delighted, dear Sir, to know that you are content with my portrait.[2] It was supposed to be lithographed in Moscow, but as a good lithographer could not be found here, it was sent to Petersburg, and I think that you would accept as gladly the original instead of the copy. If you would please make the effort of informing yourself about the most reputable lithographer of Petersburg, as well as his price, and tell me in a few words, I would be infinitely obliged to you. You know that more than once people have requested me for my poor countenance; so I must try to satisfy this obliging friendship. I was going to write to Viazemskii about it at the moment when I received your letter. I am going to write to him at this hour to compliment him on his article about Gogol,[3] which I find excellent in contrast to the opinion of practically all our literary people, whose anger against this poor man of genius could not be voiced. Khomiakov is the only one who remained faithful to him or rather to himself.

As you are undoubtedly curious about our domestic affairs, I think you will also be curious to learn that this latter is now engaged in a very serious polemic with Granovsky concerning the Burgundians and the Franks. You see that we do not waste our time in trifling things and that the questions of the day preoccupy us like the rest of the world.[4] We don't have time, it is true, to concern ourselves too much with all the silly things which happen in Europe, such as Prussian affairs,[5] for example, and other similar things, but it remains for us, as you see, more than enough to do in order to prepare ourselves

worthily, in our quality as God's new people, for the lofty mission which has been imposed upon us, for the direction of the intellectual and social movement of the human species.

What renders the grave debate of which I speak to you even graver still is the fact that it comes, they say, from the moral position of our friend Khomiakov among people of his color and your know what that position is.[6] Moreover, no matter what happens to him he will always, in my view, have the part of esteem which belongs to him, for very fortunately in men there is always something which matters more than their knowledge.

What shall I tell you about me and my miserable health? We are always balancing between a good that I do not find being good and the evil which, they say, is not evil. I thus vegetate in the fibbing of mind and of body. All that, you know well, does not at all render me amusing, except for some misguided friendship as obstinate as yours, but one must really experience the pain of the fibbing existence which one has made. Despite the space which separates us your friendship forms one of my sweetest consolations and at this hour when your forthcoming arrival has been promised in our latitudes, I will add that it also forms my most delightful hope. So come now and you will learn what the serious congenial feelings can do from an intelligent being upon or at least what passed for such. But hurry up, for the more I think about it the more I am persuaded that it is time for me to depart from this world in one way or another, by flight or by the tomb. Every day I see surging around me some insolent news or other which are taken for new powers, old lies taken for old truths, all sorts of comic ideas taken for serious things - and all that poses as authority by the power of the tribunal, or condemns you or absolves you, removes you or grants you permission to speak. It's like living in a correctional institution of the police every day of one's life. What do you expect me to do in this new world when nothing makes me smile, where nothing lends me a hand, and nothing helps me to live? After all I prefer to perish from the ennui caused by the sadnesses of solitude rather than from the hand of men whom I loved so much, whom I served based upon my strengths and men whom I would still like to serve. Good day, dear friend. Please believe in my profound affections and my very impatience to enjoy your amiable society.

Pierre Tschadayef

To Michael Zhikharev (1847)[1]

Here, my dear friend, are the lines which you deigned to approve.[2] Would you please make a copy of it, as you promised me and send it to me. I don't need to repeat to you that I don't have the intention of sending it on to their address. Since circulation of my words is not forbidden, I would quite like that they become known in that way. I embrace you with all my heart.

To Michael Zhikharev, Aug. 7, (1847 or probably 1848)[1]

My dear friend, I thank you for your letter. Your remembrance gave me all the more pleasure in that I did not anticipate it at all. You broke me off a little by your congenial feelings. They say voyages form youth, in any case I like to believe that the voyage only succeeded in awakening in you a sentiment which slumbered a moment in the sweetnesses of domestic life.[2] Amid my existence ravaged by all kinds of miseries, this tender breeze come from so far away, agreeably refreshed me. I don't know where these lines will find you, but I would like them to come to you before you have rendered yourself over to the delights of Kachira,[3] otherwise they run a great risk of not making your sympathetic fiber vibrate at all. Perhaps you will not share my opinion about the place of the Kachirian delights at this hour when you have tasted of it in all ways in different places more or less unknown to geographers. But I don't think any less that the true delights, so fruitful in all sorts of benefits for young men such as yourself are to be found in our country in the village, under the paternal roof, at the heart of this kindly tolerance which permits everything, allows one to do anything, never condemns anything without limitations, finally, just like the Russian horizon.

The laughable tableau that you make of my existence is not, I believe, very exact, but you are perfectly correct in finding that there are beings more miserable than I out there in the world. I know many of them, even among those who do not pass for unfortunate, those whose lot I am far from envying, despite the apparent happiness or the veritable splendors which surround them. However, a few days from now you will no longer be able to accuse me of faint-heartedness. The catastrophe approaches with giant steps. I make the very sincere wishes that this catastrophe, whatever it can be, may not blacken too much the existences of some persons probably destined to survive me. The other day I received a note[4] which, by the time that it made, could be considered with much exaggeration as a veritable decree of assassination. My friend, such are the beautiful days which I pass through. God grant that the person who addressed this not to me does not ever know the meaning of those lines and the fatal result which they could have. Fortunately human nature is made in such a way that people who commit evil practically never realize the evil which they commit. As for you, my dear friend, who for so long has spread such balm on my life, whose affection is still for me one of the sweetest consolations, I hope that the example of this life and the wreck that must inevitably terminate it does not remain fruitless for you, when my memory should burnish your days with some colors of melancholy. It is the best part of my heritage and it rightly goes to you in return for your friendship, without prejudice in my case against my library which also goes to you as you know. I just wrote to my brother in charging him the execution of my last wishes. At the moment when I write to you under my eyes I have his touching response in which he promises me to fulfill all my wishes exactly.

You ask me, I believe, some news about cholera. Just a few days ago it devastated us horribly; at this moment it affects no more than forty patients per day and the temporary hospitals are beginning to close. This unfortunate cholera did not want me; may God pardon it! But do you understand why it chose to let me live? As for me, I don't understand anything it at all.

You were wrong in writing nothing of your brother and of the various charms which await him in the career which he is going to pursue. You know that I cannot not be interested in a lively way in people who hold me from near or from far. I am, moreover, charmed that you have mentioned by homonym, as you call him, for one could, I believe, become interested in favor of Matthew.[5]

Good day, my dear friend; I embrace you with all my heart. Continue to think about me a little if you have some leisure time; that will not be bad for you. Moreover, one never wastes one's time by nourishing a good feeling.

Pierre Tschaadaef

To the Princess D. (Catherine Dolgorukov), January 22 (1848)[1]
First Letter

Yes, Madame, "avoid the stormy question," avoid even, if possible, all serious discussion, live as our fortunate fathers in the silence of thought and of word. However, what was I telling you. That people have wholly misunderstood, in my opinion, these words of the Lord, "my kingdom is not of this world,"[2] that the sense attributed to those words very often does not correspond at all to the prayer which we address to God in the Lord's Prayer, when we ask "that his reign come on earth as in heaven," and that consequently we should not reproach the Roman Church for having seen in the words nothing that would impede it from according to its visible chief the prestige and assistance of the temporal scepter.

Note that the debate about the temporal power of the popes was not raised at all by the Greek Church, but by the modern Protestants, children of the eighteenth century and precursors of the sages of our day. It was they who were the first to discover that Jesus Christ meant heaven with these words, that the kingdom of God was an invisible kingdom like his church, that God claimed to reign only in the hearts of men and other similar things. The Greek Fathers from the council of Florence said nothing about all that. What concerned them most was the famous *filioque*, this fatal exaggeration of Christian feeling which attributed to Jesus Christ an honor which did not belong to him. As for the pope it was his primacy which they disputed not his sovereignty, a thing which everyone found to be very natural, since everyone found it very useful and assuredly more than everyone, the illustrious guest of Eugene IV, the *orthodox emperor*, come to Italy to implore his help against the Turks, who were camped at the gates of Byzantium.[3]

The kingdom of God will undoubtedly not be made like those of this world, especially like some of these kingdoms and certainly that is precisely what Jesus Christ wanted to say. But it is also not at all as kings of the earth that the pope were destined to contribute their part in its realization on earth, it is as spiritual chiefs of Christianity, as a living expression of religious unity, as hierarchical symbol the the spiritual principle, hovering over all the other principles of this world. Similarly it is not at all as successors to the apostles, as vicars of Jesus Christ that they reign in the city of the Caesars but very simply because history wished it so in the interest of the Church of society and of civilization. An error perhaps on the part of history, but in any case an error which is not lacking in a certain appearance of truth and which could, I believe, cause a serious mind familiar with the annals of western people and with those of our own country to smile in pity. That is, I know, the point of view which people call human, but I don't understand at all, I admit, how another point of view could find its application to this world, if per chance society had been destroyed in the Middle Ages, a thing which a more spiritual church, one more submissive to the powers of earth, finally more perfect, might perhaps not have succeeded in preventing.

Too often people forget what Christianity had to work with in the West, with what forces it had to struggle. No attention is paid to the fact that it is not dogma, nor the ambition of some old priests which constituted the church there, but the impervious necessities of an entire world being born, those of these victorious races who sat upon the smoking ruins of Rome, of those ruins themselves, all powerful still in their dust, in their ashes so that if *the church was organized there like a kingdom of this world*[4] that is because it could not do otherwise, because its great affair in that hemisphere of the Christian world was to save society, menaced by barbarism, as its great affair in the other hemisphere was to save the dogma, menaced by the deleterious breath of the East and the subtle Greek mind. It is not the pope who went to Aix-la-Chapelle to place the imperial crown on the head of Charlemagne, but it is the latter who went to Rome to receive it from his hands. Finally, it is not the papacy which made western history, as our friend Tiutchev seems to believe, but it is completely on the contrary that history there which made the papacy.

Bless heaven for having placed the eastern church in the most favorable conditions in the world for practicing and teaching Christian humility, but do not accuse the western church too much of having been ambitious, for who knows what would have come to the former, if it had been found in analogous circumstances - our famous Nikon is a witness.[5]

Those who consider temporal sovereignty as being incompatible with the sacred character of the priest would thus do well, I find, to prove it to us in some other way than in unceasingly repeating the words of Jesus Christ, without taking well into account their sense, without seeking to reconcile them with the other texts of the Bible, in which the idea of the Kingdom of God is expressed in a more precise manner.[6] Besides, this incompatibility, as you know, was so little felt otherwise that popes were far from being the only sovereign princes,

bearing the miter and crown. And it is a singular thing that it is another church which today offers us the bizarre spectacle of a priest exercising sovereignty over a tribe of savage soldiers, and that is happening without the most fervent defenders of the separation of the priest from political power being offended by it. Even more, it is from the hands of an entire holy collegiate church, glorious inheritor of these superb patriarchs, from whom the odd politics of a great state demanded the seat one day in order to break it the next day and from one of the radiant lights of the eastern church that the warrior priest receives his sacred investiture and precious ornaments, distinctive signs of his dignity.[7]

This isolated factor, as you observed very well, forms, it is true, an exception in the bosom of this church, but unfortunately an exception which is the result of a complacency without a serious motive on her part and for which it is very doubtful that humanity, as well as the church herself, will ever gain any advantage at all.

The temporal power of the Roman pontiffs is thus basically only an historical result which they firstly endured, which they subsequently accepted, and which they finally abused in accordance with the eternal nature of the human heart. But the temporal power has nothing in common with the very principle of the Roman church, for which history bears all the responsibility: an external veneer for their spiritual primacy, that's all, and one which the most eminent and more religious minds of the West believed necessary for the supreme authority of the successors of Saint Peter, for the influence which they were called to exercise in this world.

The same error still, if you wish, and, one should add, an error for which no people is better equipped than we are to appreciate the fatal consequences, since it is in order not to fall into this error that we are destined to enjoy such benefits denied to other Christian people, but always an excusable error since it is to it that we also owe a thousand pieces of useful knowledge, preserved by it, and even in a certain way all the others which were born from those there, of which humanity was endowed by the people who experienced it.

Note in passing that these people were far from finding themselves in the same logical conditions as the people of antiquity, inventors of human science. These latter ones did not know the truth. On the contrary, modern western people misunderstood, repulsed an essential part of it, the most essential of all perhaps, that which regulates Christian society, i.e., the very milieu in which the Christian idea was supposed to be realized and achieve its complete bloom. A deadly blindness which necessarily had to falsify their reason and strike them with powerlessness. Fortunately it did not turn out completely that way. The blindness of modern western people did not render them completely sterile. The forgiving heavens permitted this blind race to envisage certain truths undoubtedly in favor of other less culpable races. The fortunate people, possessors of the complete truth are able to preserve all the energy, all the activity of their intellects like their erring brothers and to render to them one day

with interest the enlightenment which the fortunate people received from their erring western brothers.

Finally the point of view which you defend and which we combat is evidently the Protestant point of view, not at all that of the Greek church which is perfectly indifferent to the matter. The storms of the question are hence not to be found there. But here, in effect, is that which could raise them if the *sweet breezes* which blow around us were not to have been destined to provide an eternal and charming serenity in our heavens as well as in our hearts. For example, that would be like claiming that we suppose that a contradiction exists in the very words of the Savior, whereas, on the contrary, the contradiction is in their false interpretation which we pointed out with sorrow. That would be like not accepting all the conditions for a free, frank, courteous discussion. That would be, in a way, like misunderstanding the very spirit of our church, so lenient towards all opinions which don't directly attack the divine dogma, whose guardianship was entrusted to it; that would be finally like being more orthodox than the orthodox church herself.

There undoubtedly is what could render the debate irritating and what could put it on this muddy terrain of personality, on which mud does not fail to bespatter the poor people who let themselves be led into it. An effect unfortunately all too frequent in our slight usage of serious discussions, but which I like to believe, neither you nor I, Madame, will ever experience.

To Sergei Poltoratskii, May 30, (1848)[1]

A thousand thanks my dear friend, for your care and for your friendship. I cannot find from you the fact that people are little satisfied with the portrait, but the fault lies evidently in the proof which you sent me; such is the opinion of the artists which I share completely.[2] Beyond that, as the lithograph was, as I was assured, one of the most reputable in Paris, I have once again only to thank you for your kindly pains. Let's talk about other things. How, tell me, have you resisted the temptation to say a word about the events of the day?[3] That is a *tour de force* which I admire more than I approve. Some impressions, some crayon marks in your own way would have given me, I admit, great pleasure. By chance could it not be some progress? If it is so, then I give you my compliments with all my heart. By the time which runs along one must progress as best one can, each in his own way and it is sometimes progress when one goes backwards. For the moment I don't practice anything else, I march only by going backwards. I am doing admirably; it's a locomotive process made all the more agreeable in the certain latitudes of the globe as one is in this way certain to travel in numerous company here. May absolutely all of humanity soon be able to follow my example: that is my most sincere and most serious wish.

What shall I say to you about our very fortunate, a thousand times happy capital. They say that we always have a little of Asiatic cholera apparently to console us for the political cholera which we lack and which European people

enjoy.[4] Then, we are not at all stripped of a certain emotion, the natural effect of our surprise at finding the world so stupid. Inhabiting another planet, a new planet, pulled out of nothingness only some one hundred and fifty years ago by a crowned Leverrier,[5] we have no reason undoubtedly to get mixed up in that which is happening on the old planet which is called Europe. But how to remain indifferent when one sees this poor humanity fall again into barbarity, sink into anarchy, swim in its blood.

However, here is a palpitating bit of news of our own making: we have a new governor general. Can you guess who is the illustrious personage who is going to administrate us? I bet not. It is Count Zakrevskii. I am delighted about it for him. It is the man whom we need, the man of our time, the pure blooded Russian. I only ask that I be allowed to cry a little for the Shcherbatovs,[6] courageous people if ever there were any, who did good as Mr. Jourdain did making prose without knowing it.[7]

Meanwhile, my friend, also let us cry a little and more seriously for this poor, dear Madame Muraviev.[8] You could not imagine how much I miss her figure, all petrified with sorrow and with charity as it was. A singular matter! This so pure, so useful woman was never loved, even by the people who had the most motives for cherishing her, however, she had only the faults of her virtues. But do you know what especially hurt in her? It was her truth. Nothing is more insolent in effect than the true. So, my dear friend, by it is the road to heaven.

Perhaps you will be curious to learn what has become of her grand daughter, Sophia, the child of exile.[9] She is marrying the son of our friend Bibikov[10] and renders him rich by a million. People are not too unfortunate, you see, for having been born in Botany-Bay.[11] What more shall I tell you? That I am always sick, that I do not understand this fantasy of nature which persists for some unknown reason in prolonging my impossible existence. People salute you from all parties. I am very impatient to see you again and to embrace you provided in any case that you arrive for us in the company of a holy and just revulsion against all the odious, abominable, horrible things of which you are the witness.

If you pass by Berlin see Iakushkin[12] there, a funny fellow who studies law there, muffled up in a little lady whom he just married between two barricades. Do you conceive of that? He is the son of people whom I have loved a lot;[13] hence that is why I am interested in him. Also go and see my old friend Schelling[14] a little and know please what is happening amid this general displacement of things and of men. His philosophic royalty, I suppose, must be considerably compromised in the presence of so many unsettling royalties or on the point of being unsettled. I do not speak to you about the Circourts but you will speak to me about them, I hope, when you return. Besides, I don't know why Circourt has not been writing to me, no matter how republican he is.[15]

My friend, recommend me to the congenial feelings of Madame Poltoratskii and also to those of a certain young person of your

acquaintanceship. No need, I believe, to assure you of my congenial feelings towards you.

Pierre Tschaadayev

Letter to an Unknown (Fedor Tiutchev) July (1848)[1]

I just read, my dear Sir, your interesting memoire on the events of the day.[2] Permit me, before all, to express to you the pleasure which I experienced in reading it. Then perhaps I shall still find something to tell you about it. As you noted very well, the struggle is in effect only between the Revolution and Russia.[3] One could not characterize the question of the day any better. But I admit that what astonishes me is not that the minds of Europe, pushed by needs without names, by instincts without brakes, do not conceive of this so simple fact, rather what astonishes me is that we others, in tranquil possession of the sacred idea of which we are the depository, could not decipher it. It is, moreover, quite a long time that we possess this idea. So how is it that we still at this very hour misunderstand our mission in the world? Could it not be, by chance, caused by the very fact of this spirit of renunciation which you point out, correctly as the distinctive trait of our national character?[4] That, I find, is what is especially suitable for us to meditate about well.

One could not state too often the fact that the social drama at which we assist is only the continuation of the religious drama of the sixteenth century, this superb protestation of human reason against the authority of tradition and of the spiritual principle, aspiring towards the domination of society. Hence one soon sees this protestation, which seemed so legitimate to the most serious intellects of the epoch and which was in effect so, but which nonetheless contains within itself the entire future of European people, as bringing anarchy into religious ideas first and then attacking the very foundations of the society, by denying the divine origin of sovereign power. We were witnesses to the immense event without taking part in it. We could and we should profit from the teaching which it contained, but we did nothing of the sort. The catastrophe was completed at our gates without our understanding anything. And one moment later we ourselves went to seek in its sources the ideas to which it gave birth, the things which it created. Notice that the day when we undertook this pilgrimage to the holy places of the foreign civilization in the person of the prodigious man who expressed then the heart and soul of the nation,[5] as the man who bears his title today expresses them,[6] that day came immediately after that which saw the complete development of our religious idea, for we were at the era after the patriarchate.[7]

Thanks be to heaven, we imported into our country only some externals of this evil civilization, as well as some products of this fatal science. Civilization and science itself remained foreign to us. But it is always so that we learned to know European countries sufficiently in order to be able to judge about the

profound difference which exists between the nature of their society and the nature of the society in which we live. In reflecting upon this difference we should have naturally come to hold a high opinion of our institutions, to attach ourselves to them more profoundly still, to convince ourselves of their excellence, as well as of the power of the elements on which our social order is based. We should have found in our traditions, in our customs, in our beliefs, the form of our intimate life, in that of our public life, in our very prejudices, in a word, in all that which makes up our national factor, all the necessary conditions for an admirable development, all the sources for an infinite act of perfection, all the gems for an immense future. But it was not so. For from the moment when we came into contact with foreign ideas, we hastened to abjure our old indigenous ideas, we very quickly renounced our ancient customs, we forgot our venerable traditions, we tranquilly let our secular institutions fall apart one by one; we abdicated almost our entire past, we only preserved our religious beliefs.

It is true that these beliefs which constitute the basis of our social state were enough to safeguard us from the invasion of the worst principles of the foreign civilization, against the breath of its most deletorious emanations, but the beliefs were powerless to develop in us a feeling for the role which we were called upon to fulfill among the people of earth. So, in submitting to the yoke of this civilization, we retained the virtues of our fathers, their spirit of submission, their love for the prince, their taste for abnegation and for renunciation. But at the same time the idea deposited in our bosom by the hand of Providence did not mature. Misunderstanding completely this great idea each day we allowed ourselves to be permeated more and more by new ideas. And when the new catastrophe which struck the world for a second time occurred, we did not profit from it at all.

We were again not capable of discerning the advantages of the social state which we had the good fortune to enjoy, nor the privileges which Providence accorded us in favor of the purity of our beliefs and of the profound faith with which our hearts were imbued. A singular thing! The more the events unfolding under our eyes explain, so to say, the problem of the world and show us the lofty destiny reserved for us, the less we are capable of conceiving it. It is evident that all the revolutions at which we assisted during a half a century, far from clarifying the state of the countries which experienced them, far from clarifying the state of our own country for us, only served to cloud our intellects. And if at the moment we are now there is a certain awakening of the national principle, a certain return to the ancient traditions which were the good fortune of our fathers and which were the source of their virtues, becoming manifest among us in a more or less evident manner, then one must admit that that is a very recent phenomenon and one which up to this hour still bears only the character of an historical idea, a literary tendency perfectly unknown to the country.

Letter to Princess D (Catherine Dolgorukov) Second Letter October 6, 1850 (Second Letter)[1]

Madame, at this hour you will have read, I think, the protestation of Mr. de la Rochejaquelin, of which I spoke to you the other day.[2] I told you that this piece appeared to me to be of particular interest to us other Russians and to raise questions very often debated among us. Very well, permit me now to tell you the reflections which it suggested to me. We are going to find ourselves on a burning terrain, I warn you, but I like to believe that we will traverse it without burning our shoes.

Mr. de la Rochejaquelin supports himself with a celebrated passage from Massillon. I am going to transcribe the piece completely; it merits well being re-read the way that it came from the Christian orator. Here in what terms the humble bishop of Clermont expresses himself at Versailles in the presence of the successor of Louis XIV, of that king who had said, "the state is me":

> "But, Sire, a prince, a great man is not made for himself alone, he owes himself to his subejct. In elevating him, the people confided power in him and reserved for themselves his cares, his time and vigilance. It is the people who make the kings, just as they are. Yes, Sire, it is the choice of the nation which first put the scepter into the hands of your ancestors, it is the nation which elevated them on the military shield and proclaimed them sovereigns. Henceforth the kingdom became the heritage of their successors, but they ordinarily continue with the free consent of the nation. Their birth alone places them in possession of the throne, but it was the public vote which first attached this prerogative to their birth. In a word, as the initial source of their authority comes from us, kings should make use of it only for us."[3]

What do you say about that, Madam? Don't you find that it might be useful, that it might be necessary that kings hear this language sometimes amid the flatterers, courtesans, and valets who surround them. Do you think that God in truth, in instituting his ministers, would have wished them to cause his word to re-echo in all its authority not only in the ears of the people but also in those of their masters? I am pleased to believe that, sincere and serious, your beliefs will not allow you to refuse to admit it. Very well, do you know what is necessary for the priest to be able to speak in that way? The church must be free; she should be obedient externally and internally only to herself, i.e., to Jesus Christ always present in her midst. But, what must be done for things to be that way? Do you know of any other means than that which western people found, aided by history, by the prestige of the name of Rome, by the heritage of the prince of the apostles, by the logical spirit which distinguishes them? Do you know of another solution to this great problem other than that of a visible chief, independent of all human power, a sovereign himself, a living expression of the

unity of the church and of her authority in the necessary intervals when she cannot make her voice understood in order to proclaim her sacred and infallible will. As for me, I don't know of another way. Don't all the theological, dogmatic, canonical and other considerations become obliterated before this supreme consideration of the independence of the church. Is not the entire authority of the seven ecumenical obliged to bow before that authority, the first of all, since it implies the very existence of the church, otherwise impossible to understand, if this light did enjoy all its liberty?

There you have the entire question of the *filioque*, reduced to its simplest expression. As if it all boiled down to *filioque*. The church, or if you prefer, this fraction of the church where the idea of her universality and of her unity was the most profoundly felt, where the necessity of this idea was seen to be accepted most sincerely, wished to be obeyed in its chief, that's all. That part of the church wished to be independent, sovereign, free from all human fetters in the interests of the truth, religion, and humanity, confided to her solicitude by Jesus Christ himself. She did not want to be tossed about by the winds of each given power, of each man who proclaimed himself the master of his peers. That is what is termed the ambition, the usurpation of Rome, but basically it was, as one sees, only the natural effect of the serious interests of European people, applied to the most serious matter on earth: that matter is the necessary development of the religious ideal in society, i.e., in the very milieu in which the religious ideal meant to achieve all its results, all its consequences. Undoubtedly this extraordinary destiny which the nature of things, history and religion had bequeathed to the Roman Church had to give her the desire and the means of abusing it, and no one ever denied that. It is only too true that the human too often got mixed up with the principle and that the earthly interests got confused more than one time with heavenly interests. But it is no less true that in enduring the inconveniences of the destiny imposed on the church in one part of the Christian world, humanity extracted in general great advantages, in prodigious exercise of intelligence, a lofty esteem for the power of thought, the germ of a profound disdain for all the brutal powers of society, an extraordinary élan towards those regions from which fall all the truths, all the goods, all the things which would not have taken place, if the spiritual power had not been established as an independent and sovereign power at the very summit of society, if it had remained in the antichambers of temporal power.

Finally, whether one conceives of the church according to the viewpoint of the Protestants, simply as an assembly of the faithful, or according to the viewpoint of the Roman Church as represented by her clergy, the fact remains that she must be free to think, to act and especially to preach as she wishes. But that is precisely what is impossible without a constitution guaranteeing her against the encroachments of the powers of this world.

But perhaps, Madame, you would have preferred that the church silent, enclosed in its rituals, bowed before the political powers, might never have dared to instruct the great and the earthly masters that her words had been accorded or forbidden following the whim of these men, who are always so

delighted, as you know, to hear the truth. Perhaps you also would have preferred that the most eloquent, the most illustrious, the most holy ministers had been obliged to become stunted according to the caprices, the incapacities, and the interests of these same men. Perhaps you find that it is not necessary that God's word should enjoy its complete liberty, that it should be muzzled by human hands. Perhaps you think that preaching is not a necessary attribute of the successors of the apostles, that the Church of Jesus Christ, built by the word, has no more need of it today, and that the church can henceforth perfectly dispense with it for the greatest good of the faithful and the greatest glory of the Savior. Finally perhaps you consider that the church can live her complete life, fulfill her august functions, achieve all her results with her tongue tied, her inspirations choked off, her authority mutilated. If by chance that was your opinion, then I would have nothing more to say to you, and it would only remain for me to invoke in silence this Spirit whom Jesus Christ sent to earth, "even though He does not come from me," so that He may deign to enlighten your heart and place your misguided intelligence back upon the road of the truth.

But I hope that such is not the case, and that you are also as convinced as I am that, if unfortunately there exists in some unknown corner of the globe, a Christian community reduced to this deplorable state, such could never be the lot of the true church of Jesus Christ, the universal and orthodox church to which we have the good fortune to belong.

A word more. The Bible, they say, has pronounced that the Spirit proceeded from the Father. Yes, but then where did it declare that the Spirit did not proceed from the Son? Why, I ask you, does one preclude the other? Does not Jesus Christ share with the Father all His titles, except that of paternity? Why then would he not spare with Him that one too in virtue of which the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father? But, people still say to me, you have then forgotten that before the eighth century the Roman Church herself had not professed that the Spirit proceeded from the Son. Undoubtedly no, but as for you, have you forgotten in your turn that the Roman Church had not professed either that He proceeded from the Father before the council of Constantinople, i.e., up until the fourth century.[4] The fact is that the creeds were never drawn up except in view of some heresy or other. So, as the part of the Son in the procession of the Holy Spirit had never been challenged before the eighth century it was perfectly useless to make mention of it in the creed, that's all.

Do you want to know the entire history of the *filioque* in two words or less? Here it is: Spanish sectarians, inheritors of these Aryans who denied the divinity of Jesus Christ, got it into their heads one day to deny also Jesus Christ's part in the procession of the Holy Spirit which no one, as we have just seen, had either affirmed or denied up until then. The Church, as she had to do, firstly hesitated about pronouncing in favor of a novelty, rendered necessary by these heretics, and Leo III suspended the famous silver tablets with the old creed in Greek and in Latin in the church of St. Peter.[5] But jealous of rendering to Jesus Christ the honor due Him, the Roman Church did not delay in introducing the *filioque* into

the creed, convinced as she was firstly that she could not lose the esteem of God by furnishing to the faithful a new subject for blessing the divine name of His Son. The text was supposed to have in the eyes of the Roman church only a conditional importance, given the fact that all its canonical value was owed to the Roman church alone. Finally, the universal church could not lose her rights, that she would enjoy all the prerogatives, all the inspirations, all the lights of the primitive church even unto the end of time. Meanwhile, the two principles which since time immemorial divided the world, namely, the idea and the form, the thought and its more or less incomplete expression, came to meet on the new terrain, where all the serious interests of humanity had given themselves a rendezvous since the coming of the Savior. And finally when the fatal moment arrived in which they were in contact, the idea, having once been manifested according to the regular procedure of reason, could only accord certain concessions in favor of unity, which the Roman church did not fail to do, all the while knowing in advance that she would be accused of being inconsistent for this act of fraternal charity by those very ones whom the Roman church desired to be able to profit by it. In its turn the wording, also once having seen the light of day, could no longer be abjured.

The two Christian families hence stayed each in its respective role. One audaciously took off from the wording and did not fear to attribute to Jesus Christ a title which had not yet been generally attributed to Him, but which the one Christian family believed belonged to him in accordance with the spirit of the sacred text. More timid, more faithful to the wording, the other Christian family refused this title to him and treated as schismatics those who had made, according to that Christian family, the part of the Lord too great, those who dared to add a new grandeur to His grandeurs, yet another reason to adore Him. Such is the march of history. What must one conclude from that? Evidently that the exaggerated love of the Lord had led the faith of European people astray and that we stayed with the literal truth of the biblical doctrine, thanks to our docility towards the sacred text. Bless heaven for the fact that it accorded to us a more sober faith than to our western brothers, and let us hope that God will deign to pardon them for their misguidedness in favor of their ardent love for His well-beloved Son.

Madame, I submit these reflections to your kindly intelligence and in advance I subscribe to your judgment. May it be dictated by this pious tolerance which still distinguishes us from all the other nations of the world, but which, I greatly fear, will soon become among us only an amiable appanage of some elite natures such as you.

Letter to V. A. Zhukovskii of May 27 (1851)[1]

Perhaps many, like me have not yet thanked you, my dear Vasilii Andreevich, for sending us your latest works, but few I think have the same excuse as I. You probably remember that some ten years ago you left me in a

house that even then was collapsing from delapidation and which, in your words, was supported not by pillars but solely by the spirit. Since then it has continued to decay steadily and to frighten me and my visitors by its oblique aspect. Such is one of the ridiculous trials of my inane existence, of which there are many, and willy-nilly they sometimes distract me from discharging the pleasantest of obligations; but still I confess my guilt to you in order, however, that you should listen to what I have to say about another matter, which I hope you will see as a token of my belated gratitude.

A few days ago Bulgakov[2] showed me your short missive about your adventures with Fanny Esler.[3] Do you know the impression these few lines made on me? They were a sad reminder of the losses I have suffered; they reminded me that no longer is there anyone among us who could at least laugh at us with a certain *authority*, that is, with some benefit. 'Some are far distant, some are dead.' So now we enjoy complete impunity, tell whatever lies we like both in conversation and on paper, in friendly discussions and before the public. It can't be said that we have become less intelligent than before, but nor can it be said that we have grown wiser. It goes without saying that we have learned much about which we had no inkling before, but what's the point of that if all this newly acquired knowledge is either barren or is expressed in some obscure dialect that bores the reader to tears. Censorship is not a teacher, it can teach us nothing, and taste least of all. It's time you visited us: this is the drift of my letter. You promise to be here in the month of September, but will it be for long, *that is the question.* If you come only to look at us and enjoy the sight of us, what would be the use of that! No, come to live with us and to instruct us. You have lived too long in your foreign back of beyond; this is truly a sin. Who knows, perhaps God will reward you for this good deed and restore your wife's health in the land of the Orthodox? You won't believe how spoilt we have become since we began to live without our mentors. The lack of authority is destroying us. Neither in the world of the bookmen nor in that of the conversationalists is there anyone left from that group of honored individuals who until recently were the leaders in society and guided it; and if a few survivors are to be found, they are decaying somewhere in mental and emotional solitude. Everyone is now speaking about orientations; it is not orientation but administration that we need. You can't teach reading and writing without teachers.

We have many self-made authorities, but individuals with true standing are yet to appear in the enlightened stratum of society. Of course, when we did have authorities, among whom were you, they were not always obeyed: this has always been the case; but still, the presence of people who were universally respected not only for their intellectual accomplishments but for the traits of their character was beneficial and taught newcomers modesty. That word is absent from our most recent pocket dictionary. Please come at least to help us find it. It's strange! Never has there been less humility in evidence here than since some among us began to expatiate about that Christian code which more than any other

Christian code teaches humility, which is itself nothing but humility. Here is an example. Last year one of the most fervent exponents of the retrograde tendency wrote a play.[4] Whether it was good or bad is not important; the play was written in praise of that way of life which was allegedly destroyed by the arbitrary will of a great man[5] (who was, nevertheless, a product of this very way of life); in the opinion of our friends, that is the author's sympathizers, that was all that was required. But then it is performed in the local theatre; and what happens? On the day of the performance there appears in the Gazette an article by the author himself in which he artlessly points to his creation as an example of a truly Russian play.[6] Note that no one found this amazing, no one even paid any attention to this, for it seemed natural to everyone. And it's no surprise; how can the unquestioning worship of a single idea not lead to the worship of the mind to which it owes its existence, be that mind your own or that of your friends. Well, that is where we are at. Still, the author is an intelligent, kind and honorable man; but he had to pay tribute to the age. For we are living in an age of our own, although one that is not as dissolute as your foreign epoch.

I don't know whether Bulgakov showed your letter to our countess; I believe he only copied out for her those lines that could flatter her author's vanity. I should have liked to borrow it from Bulgakov in order to show her the whole letter according to my old habit of loving my friends, not only for their sake but for mine, but I didn't know the address of her house. It must however be said that her encomium to the elderly dancing girl outraged all decent people both here and in Petersburg. I called all this nonsense *le culte du jarret* and asked Mme. Rostophchin to translate this expression into Russian, but she was unable to.[7]

At parting I once again repeat my most humble request to you to return to your native country. It's bad for minors to be without a tutor. This is the reason that prompted me to pick up my pen, to which, as you can see, I have grown somewhat unaccustomed, otherwise I should not have been as loquacious. Pray treat my banter with indulgence and not as a teacher. I embrace you with all my soul and with all my heart. I have your manuscripts here, but I haven't had time to see them, althought they are at the Red Gates. Farewell. Your truly devoted Petr Chaadaev.

Article concerning the coup d'état of Napoleon III (1851)[1]

It would be a great mistake, I believe, if one were to think that the extraordinary events taking place in France were accomplished for the benefit of the principle of order. It is a democracy, constituted democracy, organized as a permanent factor which alone will profit from these events. I do not say that democracy is necessarily incompatible with order, but I think that for the moment it is not the principle of order at all which triumphs but democracy all by itself; later we shall see. Whether the official monarchists rejoice about it or not, that is their affair. As for us, faithful subjects of a legitimate prince, of a serious

prince, inheriter of a race brought to the throne by the unanimous and sincere wish of the country, we are only capable of deploring profoundly this brutal success of force against law.

The hero of this drama, part buffoon, part sinister, will never be anothing thing in our eyes but a clever and fortunate adventurer, and nothing more. A power acclaimed by the armed forces having filched a foolish wish from a country at bay, could never contain within itself anything of the conservative, no guarantee for the security of the future. There is nothing in common between that power and the legitimate powers, dynastic or otherwise, founded upon the traditions of the people and upon political morality. If, by chance, he might happen to do some good, to restore a little calm on the agitated sea of society, this could come about only to the detriment of the actual welfare, the real prosperity of the country. Dictatorship, good or bad, necessary or useless, can never be but a regretable provisionary measure, whose continuation could only be desired by those who lack the simplest notions of morality.

Napoleon was an exception to the general rule; he was a great man, an isolated fact in the contemporary history of the world; his grandeur excused his seizure of power. His nephew, on the contrary, is only an impudent and insolent adventurer, propelled just by chance to the head of a great nation. He is one who prevailed over the real or presumed anarchy in which he found the nation in order to impose upon her a praetorian anarchy all the more destable because it has its source not in the ignorant masses but in the elite of society.

Moreover it represents an anarchy which could also spread around the world as much as the other, it is said, failed to do so. All men of the measure of Louis Napoleon, and his ant-hill world, placed in the same circumstances will henceforth wish to repeat his adventure. It is claimed that the cabinets, calling themselves conservatives, approved of it. Too bad then for these cabinets if they have the clumsiness to applaud this acrobatic leap, accompanied with tears and grimacing teeth. One can find it to be amusing, if you wish, to see France transformed into an Olympic circus, but one must not forget that in assisting at these kinds of spectacles one must pay the price. Besides, all the acts of usurpation have always felt the need to make their crime pardonable by flattering national vanity. But is there a way of satisfying national vanity in a bellicose nation other than at the costs of other nations! Hence, advice to the neighbors.

The fact is that wise minds, true men of order could still never count upon the support of the armed forces during bad days; this illusion no longer exists. It remains henceforth proven that this force, just as it was in the days of the Roman Caesars and just as it was in more recent epochs, will never be anything, despite the progress of Christian enlightenment, other than a docile instrument in the hands of the first given power which will have something to offer the army or to promise to it. So it is the disgrace of the army in the moral opinion of the civilized world which is just being accomplished in this day on the soil which is classic for social experiments of the human species. Such is, according to me, the most important result concerning the fact of the weapons of Louis Napoleon.

Let Mr. Cobden[2] and company congratulate themselves, that they triumph over the fall of the army, it's admirably done, but I don't see too much, I admit, that honest people, who are not going to the peace conference but who very simply desire peace in the world, could rejoice about.

From this time forward all honest powers, all government not degraded by the abuse of its authority, will retreat before the necessity of serving this machine of high passion called the army. And then, what can one oppose to the formidable march of the idea of the century, socialism, demagoguery or by whatever other horrible name you may call it? For my part, I don't know at all. Perhaps one could with some chance of success oppose it with a new idea, a fresh idea, more powerful and truer than all those which in recent times traversed the world by devastating it. But who will find this very fortunate idea? Will it be one of these poor brains wandering misguided amid the rubbish of old regimes and with the new regimes in order to re-establish the old ones by exaggerating their accomplishments?

Do you think that the more or less silly devotees of order are nonetheless going to pull it out one of these days form the bottom of old cast-off clothes or from the heap of armour soiled by their Gothic arsenals. Don't dream it. Should the idea itself come to offer itself to their astonished regards, they would take it to be the statue of the commandant returned from hell and, more cowardly than Don Juan, they would refrain, believe me, from inviting it to their feudal banquet.

But, people say, the coup d'état of Louis Napoleon saved France from the fatal crisis of 1852. Firstly it would have to be proven that this crisis was as imminent as people say. Undoubtedly Mr. Carlier[3] may know much more at length about this matter and if he affirms that the catastrophe was inevitable, one must well believe him at his word, but there is one thing that everyone ignores and that is that, invested with the right to declare all of France in a state of siege, the executive power thereby found itself deprived of all the possible means of repressing evil passions, of crushing mutiny of killing socialism without departing from legality, without killing the constitution. So, what was the good of the coup d'état? But, people say, it was still necessary that the president remain in power, for he alone could ward off the storm, and for that it was necessary to re-establish the universal suffrage which the national assembly did not want. Good luck! Well, here we are returned to the pure democracy of Mr. Proudhon.[4]

Do not, my dear friend, confuse the sinister events of our day with previous revolutions. The troubled European minds can misinterpret the true character of the cataclysm which they are experiencing, carried away as they are by the general torment, menaced as they are or as they feel they are when it comes to their dearest interest and their most previous goals. But as for us others, happy and calm, regurgitating with all kinds of felicites, let us evaluate things better, let us learn how to distinguish the appearance from the truth. It is our privilege to have nothing to do with the miseries of the rest of the world, to have only to

regard what other people do and to profit from their faults and from their success. Totally disinterest in their cause, unmoved jurors, let us judge it with the serenity of minds disengaged from all passion and from all prejudice.

What did the first revolution want? The abolition of certain odious and oppressive privileges of certain absurd distinctions, which those who profitted by them did not themselves want anymore. Also were not the true authors of this revolution gentlemen, members of the clergy, men of letters belonging to these classes or living among them? Now that is no longer the matter; it now is only a matter of a more equal repartitioning of the national riches, a more equitable distribution of the goods of the earth. A question of social economy, posed by the natural march of things, by the logical development of the economic idea in society, which preoccupied the spirit in all times, but for which the solution has become urgent in our day on the soil of France, thanks to an egotistical and shabby government which only knows how to come to terms with the needs of its time, without ever forthrightly thinking of ever satisfying them, thanks to a blinded family which imagines that it can revive again for an epoch of civilization that which has never been seen except in times of ignorance, namely the establishment of a dynasty which has not understood that our century could very well endure and preserve some thrones but not to establish any new ones again.

A singular thing: People finished by finding quite just the revolt against the privileges of birth, but, birth after all is only a law of nature as well known as gravity or chemical affinity. And today one finds unjust the revolt against the insolence of capital, which is a thousand times more oppressive, more brutal than the pretensions of birth ever were. Birth obliges, it is said. I am not aware that today it is said "capital obliges."

But history will be merciless towards the man who, holding in his hands the destiny of several millions of his fellow men, played with them because his ambition, his whim, or his madness and of whom Europe will be able to say after the ruination of forty years of peace that "it was he who began it."

The reaction in European countries, where peace has just been upset by the recent events, has as its purpose the strengthening of the power shaken by these events. Hence it is not a matter of re-establishing in these countries the ancient order of things, borne away by the hurricane of the century, but very simply to render to governments the force which they lack. But what do the peevish children who speak about reaction in our country really want? Power in our country is not lacking any force. It is found invested here with sufficient authority. Public security is not menaced in our country by indifferent masses of proletariats. Finally, we enjoy all the benefits of a government functioning with all the regularity and all the liberty imaginable. Against what then do you wish to react in our country? It is evident that it can only be directed against the invasion of certain ideas and certain principles which were never foreign to us and which a revolution of a particular nature, unknown to other countries of the world, introduced into our country. But how were these ideas and these principles manifested, where were they produced? Apparently in the new

institutions which ruled us. And where would the ancient ideas and ancient principles be found characterized? Isn't it in the institutions which no longer exist? It is true that the new institutions were imposed upon us by a power arisen from our soil, from the bowels of our society, such as it was formed by history, which in its turn is merely the result of the particular character of the Slavic race, of the nature of our religious beliefs and especially of the geographical and economic conditions of the country which we inhabit. Nonetheless it is in the ancient social forms that the primitive elements of society resided and were preserved. These forms were nothing but the expression of our national spirit, of our institutions, of our total being. So if one wishes to generate a truly national impulse upon our country, it is evident that there is nothing else to do but to revert to the ancient forms, erased by the system inaugurated at the outset of the past century, and which, one must admit, had obtained the universal vote of the country either by the effect of an adroit juggling act, or by that of an irresistible seduction or finally by that of a violence without any example in the history of the world. Such is in effect the thought of our reactionaries, if they still exist, moreover inoffensive types, as one sees, since the wishes which they form tend only to assure to the political power even more authority, if that is even possible, and to enclose it in even more prestige, to inspire the people to even more veneration for it than ever.

To Michael Zhikharev, Nov. 1 (1853)[1]

Finally, my dear friend, you come to give me a sign of life. When I say "you come" I mean that your letter reached me a month ago, but, as you know, the measure of time has no longer existed for me for a long time. In this case, as you see, I am partially taking the part of this poor century, so brutally scoffed at by you, but which in any case is still not agitated any less within the narrow limits of time and space, despite those noxious vapors from it, an apt symbol of the rapidity of its course, which so justly upset our patriotic heart. The fact is that the look of the civilized world had in effect to change its face a little since I had the honor of seeing it for the last time some thirty years ago.[2] But it is also true that the picturesqueness of Europe, that of the Rhine river, for example, were not exactly like the picturesqueness of Kachira and of whatever river flows over there. You must do it, my friend, and content yourself a little that you will find it in the rest of Europe. I don't even know if your urbane existence at the amiable Chamovniky[3] did not offer more nourishment for your rustic tastes than the most desolate Alpine peaks will be able to offer you, should you deign to visit them, where, after all, some traces of civilization are seen. No matter what, if you have gone to search in Europe, beyond an increase in health, nothing but country sweetness, clumsy pilgrim, I fear that in the final analysis you may find that you have quite badly set up your program. So decide to request from western civilization, as people say in the Arbat, something else other than the steppe with its numerous and varied delights. Who knows perhaps you will end

up by finding in this civilization something which may compense you for your deprivation up to a certain point. I would hope that the demon of picturesqueness would push you to England; you would find there, at least I hope, that the ravages of civlization have not completely inveiled the delightful figure of nature at least so long as the steam engine, gas and electricity have not come to overturn completely this country so privileged by its landscape.

It was in the year of our Lord 1823, I believe, I was living in a cottage of Sussex, covered with ivy and vines.[4] My house faced out upon one of those walls of a classic parsonage; on the other side I saw the field of my rustic civilized proprietor who, upon finishing the works of the day, played the sonata of Pleyel on the flute[5] and other pieces of no less entertaining music. Before me a little castle, no longer the sojourn of the Queen Charlotte of scandalous fame.[6] Far away the sea always scintillated, despite the eternal fog hovering over the entire country. Well, all that appeared very picturesque to me, I admit, without speaking about Miss Alice with whom I sometimes rode in my tilbury.[7] Go and see that, my friend.

Article for *L'Univers*, Jan. 15 (1854)[1]

The Russians do not cease reproaching us for our ignorance of all that concerns their country. It is very true, and we readily admit, that we do not know their vast empire better than that of the Birmans, even though it is situated at our gates. We shall even agree that, if you wish, there exists no people on earth who are less known than the Russian people. But, I ask you, how can one come to know well a people, whether they still remain on the world scene or whether they've left it, if it makes no difference. Does one not come to know a people by studying their monuments and their writers and by asking the people themselves about what constitutes their particular nature, and what sets them apart from the other nations of the world? But, where are the monuments of the Russian people, where are writers who will reveal to us the distinctive traits of this people established between East and West - a people who, they say, threatens East and West by its ambitious aspirations? Do Russians, by chance, imagine that the immense expanse of a country is enough to make it an interesting branch of human knowledge and enough to give us the desire to know the language, laws and social state of the tribes which inhabit it? That is a pure illusion of national vanity which science can take into account only to register it among the aberrations of people destined to serve for the teaching of generations to come.

So what is Russia then for us? A fact, nothing but that, a completely bare fact which tends to roll over the map of the globe in more gigantic proportions day by day and hence which must be stopped from being able to grow out of control and from encroaching upon the old civilized world, inheritor, depository and guardian of all previous civilizations including the civilization from which

Russian once took her first bits of culture and the pompous and sterile form of worship in which she remains enclosed.

What could you wish to be studied there? A page of geography, that's all, in order to be able to hold onto something perhaps more imaginary than real concerning this power. Moreover, doesn't everyone know that Russia owes a great portion of her force to European civilization, to that civilization from which she profited quite precisely because she did not possess any other? But, this civilization, its forms, its procedures and its results are perfectly known, so there is nothing there to learn. Everyone also knows that, deprived of western enlightenment, Russian would have become booty for one or other of her warlike neighbors who were more advanced than she in the art of warfare. If she had achieved her actual state by means of her internal development, if she had gained her political importance from her own nature, it would have been an entirely different matter. Then everyone, including the entire civilized world, would have undoubtedly inquired about this fruitful and powerful nature, the elements which compose it, the character which she imprints upon numerous and intelligent populations, the different phases which she underwent - but it was not at all like that. As is known, one fine day Russia herself shook up all that constituted her particular physionomy, apparently recognizing the insufficiency of her national element, and then Russian clothed herself in the forms of modern civlization. And it is only from that day that she became powerful and that Europe turned its uneasy regards towards her not as a new object for study or for meditation but very simply as a political fact which Europe had to observe in order not to become absorbed by Russia.

There are, I know, a good number of Russians today, some of whom we are acquainted with in Paris, who claim that Russian underwent the reform of Peter the Great despite herself. But in attributing to the energetic will of one sole man, be he the greatest of mortals, a revolution which by their own admission transformed the country from top to bottom, what are the clumsy patriots doing if not dishonoring their nation rather than exonerating it? But such averse reaction is far from being the opinion of the majority of Russians who have not been made fanatics by the retrospective utopias of their new national school. What would you think, in effect, about a nation which would firstly allow the fruit of its own history to be ravaged by the fantastic whim of one of its sovereigns and then when providence itself appeared to be charged with the care of facilitating the nation's return to the venerable ways of its fathers by according the nation four successive reigns by women - and, my God, what kind of women, a disgrace to their sex - and better than that, after an entire century of praetorian revolutions, such a nation would remain unmoved in the new mold in which it was cast despite itself? Very well, such is however the idea of their nation formed by these good Russians of the new school so jealous for the glory of Russia.

Fortunately for the honor of the human species, things proceeded in a completely different manner. Peter the Great only continued a revolution the origins of which, in a manner of speaking, we discover already in the first pages

of Russian history. He reformed only that which existed only nominally. He abolished only that which could no longer endure. He established only what was in the process of being established by itself. He acccomplished only what his predecessors had already attempted to accomplish before him. In my opinion, that is the only rational way for us to take into account his famous reform program and the acquiescence which the Russian people gave to it. But if one is just aware that the entire history of his people is basically composed only of a series of successive abdications in favor of their princes, that the nation began its historical career by giving itself over to a handful of Scandinavian adventurers invited in by the nation itself to come and govern it, that the nation then went to seek a religion among foreign people, that the nation later borrowed more odious customs from the conquering savages of their country, and finally that the nation has not stopped undergoing all kinds of exterior influences - then undoubtedly one will find the grand act of submission, which initiated our civilization and introduced it into our political system, to be even more natural. And hence one should no longer be surprised to see the ancient possessors of this civilization and of this political system attaching so little interest to the study of its social state.

In any case, the moment has come when our ignorance about the place of Russia could no longer continue without causing detriment to our own security. Finally we must seriously seek to take into account the principle which pushes this immense empire beyond its limits and causes it to exert a formidable pressure on the rest of the world, a pressure which we considered for too long a time as the effect of an ambitious politics of a profoundly contrived system, but which is, as we are going to see soon, only the very natural effect of several causes of a completely different character. But no matter what it is, a political, moral or geographical phenomenon, it doesn't matter, we can no longer afford avoiding plunging ourselves into a profound study of this phenomenon no matter what it is. We must try to prove to Russia herself, if possible, that she marches to her own doom every time that she directly opposes to the old civilized races, who are more powerful a thousand times than she, due to the long and laborious work of their intellects and due to the continuous, perservering exercise of their faculties rather than their material forces. We must also try to prove to Russia that Russia herself owes everything to that and even this feeling of exclusive nationalism which she arms herself with today against us and boasts with pride.

Moreover, one must not imagine that this is a task fraught with extraordinary difficulties: it is not at all. It is enough to have passed some years among Russians to become convinced that, given the conditions which the government, which they have provided themselves with, created for them, an enlightened and impartial foreigner, despite the insufficiency of materials offered to his investigations, possesses in fact not only more means of evaluating their social state than the Russians themselves have and that he still can, without too much presumption, charge himself with the task of enlightening them about the processes in which they are engaged.

Firstly two elements appear in Russian history: the geographical element already pointed out by us and the religious element. Then one just adds to it a third element, the servitude of the rural population. We shall concentrate principally upon the latter, because it results, it seems to us, from the two others and completely embodies them. But, before going any further, we note that up until the days of Peter the Great's reforms, Russians knew no other teacher than their church and hence consequently the entire moral development of this great people before that epoch, whatever the development was, rightly belonged to the church alone.

Everyone knows that serfdom exists in Russia, but people are very far from realizing its true nature, its role, and its importance in the social order of this country. For example, one would commit a great error should one proceed to assume that its influence is exerted only upon this unfortunate part of the nation which endures its oppressive weight. On the contrary, its influence upon the classes which profit from it must be studied in a special way if one wishes to comprehend its most deplorable effects due to his eminently ascetic beliefs, due to the temperament of his condition, finally due to the space which very often separate him from his master, the Russian serf, one must say, has not so much to complain about as one might think. His actual situation, moreover, is only a natural consequence of his previous situation. It is not violence which reduced him to servitude; it is the logical march of things, taking place at the basis of his intimate life, his religious feelings and his nature. Do you want proof of that? Look at the free man in Russia: no apparent difference between him and the serf. There is, I find in the resigned look of this latter one something more dignified, more calm than the vague and worried look of the other one.

In effect, by its origins as well as by its particular character Russian slavery offers a unique factor in the world without precedent in history, without anything analogous in the current state of human society. Constituted as it was among the people of antiquity as it is in our day in the United States of America, it has had no effect other than one which results naturally from this detestable institution, namely misery of the slave, corruption of the master. But the influence of slavery in Russia is vast in another way: We just observed that no matter what kind of a slave the Russian serf is in the complete meaning of the term, the Russian serf does not, however, bear a mark of it on his person. He is not at all separated from the other classes of society either by customs, or public opinion, or racial difference. In the house of his master the Russian serf shares the daily work of the free man, in the fields he lives mixed up together with the peasants of the free communes. Everywhere he is mixed in with the free subjects of the empire without any apparent distinction. Very well, it is precisely in this bizarre confusion of the most opposite instincts of human nature that, in our opinion, the source of the general degradation of the Russian people is to be found. It is because of that that everything in Russia bears the brand of servitude, customs, tendencies, instruction and yes, even liberty itself, insofar as any liberty at all can exist in that country.[2]

Four Fragments[1] [1854]

One must not forget one thing which is that, compared with Russia, all of Europe is liberal - kings, cabinets and people. So how could you think that Europe could experience real congenial feelings for Russia? It's the natural antagonism of light against darkness. At the present moment what adds to the animosity of European people against Russia is that Russia is not content with becoming part of the European political system; on the basis of her power, today Russia claims to pose among civilized people as a country more civilized than the others, by taking advantage of the calmness which she preserved during the recent crisis which passed through Europe.

Note that it is no longer just the Russian government alone which expresses these claims, but the complete country. Instead of the docile and submissive disciples which we were before, look, we have now become masters of those who were yesterday still our masters. An occasion was offered and Europe seized it by the hair in order to humiliate us, that's all.

In speaking about Russia people always believe that they are speaking about a political power like others. But that is not so at all. Russia is an entire world obeying the will, the caprice, the fantasy of only one man, whether he is called Peter or Ivan, no matter, it's always an incarnation of arbitrariness. Russia is a country which, contrary to all the laws of human societies, advances only towards its own enslavement and those of the people who are neighbors. Hence it is as much in its own interest and that of other nations that it would be useful for Russia to pursue a new path.

My intimate relations with the departed Archbishop gave me many occasions to talk with him. He always spoke with respect about the eastern church and hoped in the future to see it effect a rapprochement with the Anglican Church.

I know, "health is not contagious, it is sickness which is, just as in the case of truth and error." An orthodox Christian responds to me with "And hence Christianity." Well, never would a serious Christian make this reply. For the true Christian, Christianity is a separate thing, a purely divine thing which has nothing in common with the order of human ideas. For the true Christian the establishment as well as the propagation of Christianity is a perpetual miracle, especially the propagation. Even more so for the philosopher himself Christianity is a separate thing, and he is obliged, if he wishes to define its history, to explain a combination of unique events in the history of the world.

To Adolphe de Circourt, Jan. 15 (1854)[1]

My dear Sir,

Soon two years will have passed since you addressed to me a letter full of very interesting things. It was at the time of your famous *coup d'état*.[2] Everyone wanted to read it, so much so that the letter ended by wandering into

the hands of persons who were curious to know your opinion about this extraordinary event. Meanwhile the reaction ran its course; the world entered into a new phase. Reflection was necessarily suspended in the presence of the general defeat of all the ideas and all the principles which once had directed the people.

What could you want me to see about all that? Perhaps you find that the world is still far from being returned to its normal state, that the actual moment is no more propitious for a rational exchange of thought than the previous epoch was. But no matter what, I finally must write to you if only in order not to pass for an insolvent debtor in your eyes. Moreover, I recall very well that basis of your ideas. I could thus pefectly rebind the broken thread of our conversation. But I prefer to speak with you about something other than your country, whose situation remains completely unintelligible to me since the day when the burlesque parody of a great glory ravaged your liberties under the pretext of rendering tranquility to you. It will, however, always refer a little to you, in as much as we find ourselves faced with the questions of the day; for it is the privilege of your country to cause other people on earth to participate in your domestic affairs. Hold on, you know the profound calmness which we enjoy, our traditional devotion to the order of things established in our land. Well, we have no less felt to a certain extent the contre-coup of your recent exploits. Our patriotism has grown. Since time immemorial we were wholly satisfied with the regime imposed upon our country by its history, by its geographical conditions and by its religious beliefs. We are today a thousand times more satisfied. Our submission to this tutelary regime has never been manifested with such a complete confidence. The natural effect of all that is that those who govern us have at this hour even more latitude than they had previously in following the principles which always guided them. Hence they profit from it with a bit of rare wisdom. For example, you could figure out what wise and vigorous methods we saw appear recently designed to preserve us from the fatal influence of your ideas and your revolutions.

The new limits imposed upon literary journalism by a hierarchical censorship, coming from the very source of power, safeguards us from the fatal license of the press, one of the principal causes of your disasters. The pernicious extension of false knowledge, another source of evil, is paralyzed by the new rule which reduces the number of students to be admitted to our schools of higher education to the number strictly necessary for service to the State. One of the vastest institutions of public instruction in our capital has been suppressed;[3] it was an institution which parenthetically had furnished to the country more than one eminent man, and, among others, the well known teacher of the august heir to the throne, the dear poet whom we just lost.[4] The avid curiosity of our young people to know a lot of useless things for the welfare of the country is further repressed either by the very program of scholarly studies or else by the difficulty of obtaining a permit to travel abroad. The measures which were still in the past designed to prepare for the gradual emancipation of

our rural population and which nourished in the bosoms of this population some dangerous fermentations, have definitively been abandoned. Finally, and this I find most important, all the upper administrative posts of the empire are filled today with men most capable of preventing us from deviating from the good road.

The new nominations distinguish themselves especially by the most fortunate choices. The minister of interior has just been conferred upon a man who administered the interesting province, the cradle of Russia, where he was for a long time the governor general with admirable energy, facing evil passion to come out into the open in order to be delivered once to prosecution by the public prosecutor, placing the zeal of the dominant clergy in the service of the State, and finally bringing about the coalescence for the great national unity, a very dear wish of our new patriots, with complete success.[5] The ministry of public education,[6] taken away from the man who more than any other sought to develop in our young people the taste for a vain and ambitious science, has been restored to the hands of a man of profound piety, an enemy of all knowledge, who offers the surest guarantee to make our youth henceforth march in the somber and submissive pathway from which they were misguided for too long a time. Of the three ministries which control in our country the highest direction of public mind, only the ministry of police or what replaces it, has not undergone any modification either in its chief or in the remainder of its excellent personnel, but in return his sphere of activity has been considerably augmented.[7] He has been invested with new prerogatives which are in tune with him: beyond the factual surveillance of his natural jurisdiction, he has also been intrusted with all the intelligence factors and they confirmed upon him the most efficacious powers for suppressing all disorderly swings of thought.

Among the high state functionaries newly called to the special trust of the government, one must also point out the eminent man charged with representing power in our ancient city.[8] You are acquainted with Moscow as well as any of us; you can appreciate his importance as a monument of the past, an expression of the parent and a flag for the future; you will understand completely the significance of this choice. In effect, at the moment when all the European democracies have just been shaken by the signal from Paris, where can you find a man more appropriate to this important past than the officer of fortune coming out of this ranks of the lesser nobility from the provinces, placed very close to the people, someone who speaks only their language and who judges things only from their point of view, and who finally sees only with a jealous eye the nobility which is mainly policed as the only social class to which European ideas can find access. Hence the effect was instantaneous. You know that the old liberalism of the previous regime, an absurd anamoly in a country piously devoted to its princes, whose idiom expresses by the same term altar and throne, thanks be to God, has not existed among us for a long time, but unfortunately something of it has remained in the manners and in the language of the people

who make up what is called good company. But in times like these even that could present some trouble in the eyes of a foresighted minister.

Hence it is soon seen that the salons of the new governor general, once the meeting place of a select society, are being emptied of their old habitués and are being opened to a new society, very foreign to the other one, since the new society is docile to the prudent exigencies of the day. From that moment onwards no other suitable liberty was known other than that which bears with it a sweet quality of customs stripped of all formal prudery, a fond heritage of a celebrated epoch in the modern history of France.[9] I cannot tell you about all the good which our young people extract from the new regime inaugurated in the mayor's house. Nothing is more dangerous in the time in which we live than to allow young minds to be handed over to those tastes which are too serious, in which the sterile work of thought is fed all sorts of fragments of the imagination. Very well, the kindly hospitality of the family of our governor general provides a delightful remedy for this evil. The jovial familiarity of the mother and the seductive manners of the daughter are carrying out a veritable revolution to the profit of the good cause of changing the habits of our youth.

Letter to M. Zhikharev, (1854)[1]

It is a great error, in my opinion, to imagine that the present crisis is only the effect of an imprudent policy, on the one hand, and the jealousy of the great powers and of the revolutionary spirit, on the other. Never was a regime less ambitious than that of the emperor Nicholas, and if one can reproach the Russian cabinet for anything it is rather for having been too prudent. The personal character of our emperor enters undoubtedly very much in the events which are taking place today, but this character is not a political system, and the Russian cabinet, in submitting to it, was not making politics; it was obeying, that's all.[2]

Letter of an Unknown to an Unknown (Female) (between October and December, 1854)[1]

No, a thousand times no, this is not the way that we loved our country in our youth. We wished her well-being, we desired some good institutions for her, we even sometimes went so far as to wish her a little liberty if that were possible. We thought of her as great and powerful, full of future, but we did not think either that she was the most powerful country in the world, or that she was the most fortunate. We were far from imagining that Russia might stand for some sort of abstract principle containing the definitive solution of the social problem or that Russia constituted in herself an entire separate world, a direct and legitimate inheritor of the glorious eastern empire with its titles and virtues.[2] Nor did we believe that Russia had a special mission to absorb in herself all Slavic people and thereby to bring about the regeneration of the human species. We especially did not think that Europe was on the point of receeding into

barbarism and that we had been charged with saving civilization with some scraps of that same civlization which had served once to snatch us from our ancient torpor.

We treated Europe with civility, even sometimes with respect; for we know that Europe had taught us many things, among others, our own history. When it happened by chance for us to triumph over her, as Peter the Great did, we said, it is to you Gentlemen that we owe it. And so then one fine day it happened that we arrived in Paris and that we were received kindly, forgetting for a moment that we were basically only young newcomers and that we had yet contributed nothing to the common fund of the nations, not even a poor little solar system as the Poles our subjects had,[3] not even a miserable algebra, as those Arab infidels whose absurd and barbarous religion we combat today. We were treated well, because we were found to have some manners of well educated people, because we were polite and modest, as newcomers were supposed to be, without any claim to public esteem other than our advantageous size. You have changed all that, so be it, but please allow me to love my country in the manner of Peter the Great, Catherine and Alexander. The time is not far off, I hope, when that patriotism will perhaps be found to be worth more than another.

Note that every government, aside from its particular tendencies, possesses the instincts of its nature, as an animated and intelligent force, destined to live and to act: for example, the government senses or does not sense itself to be supported by its governed. But the Russian government knew itself this time to be in perfect accord with the general will of the country. Hence, in great part, the fatal blunderings of its politics which took place during the present crises. Who does not realize that the reaction which is claimed to be national has reached the state of veritable monomania among our new scholars. It was no longer a matter, as before, of the prosperity of the country, nor of civilization, nor of any kind of progress - it was enough just to be Russian. This title alone contained all the goods imaginable, including salvation. They believed that they had discovered at the basis of our rich nature all kinds of marvelous elements, previously ignored by the universe. They began to repudiate all the serious and fruitful ideas that Europe had taught us. They claimed to inaugurate on the soil of Russia an entire new moral order which relegated us to some Christian East or other, invented for our particular usage, without realizing in the least that in isolating overselves morally from European people we were also isolating ourselves politically, that once our fraternity with the great European family was broken, none of those people would lend us a hand at the hour of danger. Finally the most audacious of the devotees of the new national school did not hesitate to salute in the fight in which we found ourselves engaged, the realization of their retrospective utopias, the dawn of our return to the tutelary regime abjured by our fathers in the person of Peter the Great.

Too unlettered, too frivolous to evaluate or even to decipher these learned hallucinations, the government scarcely approved of them at all, I know; sometimes the government even haphazardly launched a brutal boot at the most

advanced and least prudent of the blessed gang,[4] but the government was no less convinced that on the day when it threw down the gauntlet before the godless and decayed West, the congenial feelings of all the new patriots, who take their unfinished studies, their inarticulate wishes and their vague hopes for the true national policy, would not fail the government any more than the docile enthusiasm of the crowd, always a party to all the patriotic dreams told in the customary banal idiom during similar occurrences. And look how one fine day the advance forces of Europe were in the Crimea.

Letter to Michael Zhikharev, November 3 (1855)[1]

My dear friend, I was going to write to you at the moment when your letter arrived. Firstly I am going to respond to your lines, then you will learn of the little posthumous service which I am asking of you, posthumous with relationship to me, of course. I once again thank you for your friendship and I once again admit that I scarcely anticipated it at all. It is, I know, one of my vices that I take certain things too seriously, but how can one find the means of correcting oneself when one is in the midst of traversing the second half century and when one approaches the end of the course for the most serious matter in the world? In any case I am delighted to find you also such a good child. It seems to me that this title is better for you than that of having been aborted, which you may like, I believe, to adorn yourself with. What do you think about it? Note that these abortions are almost always in our country the effect of the social conditions in which we are enclosed in such a way that the most honest aspirations of the most legitimate ambition are basically only gaucheries. All that you say, moreover, is perfect. There is only one thing in your letter that I do not understand, it is your illusion concerning my position. In any case I can only rejoice about it, since that evades for you the disappointment of sensing that you are assisting at this dismal catastrophe which, after all, could not be a matter of indifference to you. I do not have any desire to repeat to you what I was saying in this context the other day, but I cannot refrain from warning you that it is completely useless for you to delude yourself with the hope of seeing things take up their ordinary course again.

A new disaster has just taken away yet another sheet anchor from me. Tomorrow or after tomorrow all will be said, and I will have but to uncover my head and await the lightening which is destined to annihilate me. But since neither you nor I possess the lightening rod which could deter it, let's not talk about it any more and allow me to let you know what I was going to tell you in taking up my pen.

Yet one more word about your letter. My dear friend, it seems that among your "kachirian riches", such as, for example, the brilliant hoarfrost of your forest of high trees which you look forward to with such impatience, and among other similar things, you lack some thing which is very useful in certain circumstances of life, namely a dictionary, for you would have directly

discovered after the word "délices" the words S. F., which is to say feminine substantive. More familiarized with the French writing you would besides have, without any other indication, found it impossible to couple the masculine with this word, which is moreover only written in the plural. I tell you all this because you seem to attach a kind of importance to that which you may regard, I suppose, as a fault of language, and I smile at the idea that after my death you will find yourself furnished with an entire collection of dictionaries of all types and formats, which will naturally give you the means of rectifying some of your grammatical beliefs.[2]

So here is what this is all about: At this hour I am occupying myself with putting a little order in my papers, and I hasten as fast as I can to fulfill my task before the supreme day which will put an end to all my earthly preoccupations.

God knows if I shall succeed, for I just discovered that I have scribbled on more paper than I thought. But, in any case, I beg you, my friend, to come to Moscow at my first appeal to take possession of my poor scraps of paper before xxx[3] lays hands on them. On the edge of the blessed abyss which is destined to swallow me up, I naturally cannot nourish myself on vain illusions, but it is impossible for me not to admit that among this jumble there are some pages which merit to be preserved, if only as pieces justifying a little chapter in the history of our time. You have given me, my friend, so many proofs of your affection and you yourself have always had such an interest in my writings that I could not doubt your eagerness to fulfill my wish. Nonetheless I have need of a word from you to put my mind at ease about this matter, and I beg you not to refuse me.

You asked me, I believe, if I have seen xxx.[4] I have seen him a couple of times at his place, and I found him as interesting and as good to see as before, but I have not assisted, even though he invited me there, at those famous student exercises of which the journal rendered so a grotesque account.

I am completely touched by the kindly memory on your father's part. Tell him please that I also preserve the memory of his frank and cordial friendship, so different from this official friendship which, far from doing good to one's heart, brings it some hard blows, a kind of torture which is all the more cruel as one must suffer it in silence. So may he accept with my last farewells, the expression of my lively gratitude for his past and present congenial feelings as well as his wishes, however ineffectual they are, for an impossible future. I am certain that God guards for him yet a few days of serene happiness and pure joy, for his heart tells me that he merits them.

Good day, my dear friend. And you too undoubtedly will see more than one prosperous and radiant day. Satisfaction of the heart and of the mind will not be lacking to you. I am certain of it, because you too have what merits them. But that will only come at the price of some lessons which experience will charge itself to give to you. God grant that those lessons will not be too severe - this is one of my dearest wishes.

Remember me please to my cousin.[5]

Pierre Tschaadayev

Letter from Ardatov to Paris (between 1844 and 1855)[1]

Reports of the imminent revival of the only journal in Moscow have been reaching us in the back of the beyond where we have been living for some time. Having retained our old contacts with numerous men of letters in Moscow, whom we knew during a time when they were yet to display the excellent aspirations that now distinguish them, we always strove not to lose sight of the mark they were leaving in their current field. And thus we quickly learned of the change that has newly occurred in the fortunes of the 'Muscovite.' The new contributor, who has assumed the whole burden of the future editorship, was already a good friend of ours when, following another path, which was quite contrary to his current orientation, he was testing his young strength accompanied by the general sympathy of the entire circle of literary men of the time. Since then we have felt the warmest sentiments of love and respect for him, and that is why we heard with joy of his return to literary activity.[2] We were about to address to him on this occasion a message of congratulations with an expression of our sincere desire that his enterprise should be crowned with success, when all of a sudden the announcement concerning the publication of the 'Muscovite' next year fell into our hands. I do not know how to describe to you the effect made by those few lines of print. On the one hand, the liveliest satisfaction, a heart-felt delight at the sight of all the good intentions of the new editors, all their ardent love for our ancient way of life, our ancient mores, our ancient social organisation, in a word, for all that which, as one of our new mentors put it, 'contains the secret of Russian greatness;[3] on the other - surprise and sadness at the sight of a hidden malice towards all that is not Russian, as if one cannot love our good, tolerant, clement Russian without feeling hatred for the rest of creation!

I was all the more amazed at this circumstance, since I had loved the author of the announcement for precisely those qualities of heart and soul that I could not longer find there. How did this change in him occur, how did his beautiful soul, hitherto incapable of hating anything at all, now become filled with such strong enmity towards the whole of mankind that neither the rules of courtesy, nor the desire for success, nor the prolonged presence in it of an exalted moral sense could tame it? This is what I said to myself, having read the announcement for the first time, but having re-read it, I was puzzled anew. My old friend had once enjoyed an excellent command of language; his few writings were distinguished by a rigorous cogency, consistency, and clarity of thought. Where did all this disappear? It's almost impossible to understand what he wishes to say. 'Reverence for the verities of Orthodox Christianity,' he writes. But what is Orthodox Christianity? Until now we have heard only of the Orthodox Church, although strictly speaking, this term too is nothing but a

pleonasm, for a church that is not orthodox is not a church, but at least this pleonasm is necessary in order to distinguish the church that considers itself orthodox from those churches that it does not consider such; but tell me, what need was there to confer that adjective on Christianity itself? Is a Christianity that is not Orthodox, i.e., that is false, but that nevertheless is still a Christianity, possible? Is there any room in the realm of the eternal spirit and the certain truth for a semi-truth? How strange! How could such thoughtlessness in one's ideas, such vagueness in one's Christian understanding, such rashness in one's words, which apparently allow the possibility of a Christianity that may not be true, but that despite that does not lose the right to be called Christianity, occur in precisely the spiritual sphere that rightly calls itself the only true one.

He continues, 'Love for our ancient existence, heartfelt sympathy for our present one.' It follows that Russia's current existence is not deserving of his love, it must be satisfied merely with his sympathy; it further follows that the life of a people may be severed without some extraordinary shock; it further follows that a people can one fine morning reject its previous existence and begin to live in a new way; it further follows that one strong will is enough to push aside the entire past of a people and to create for it some artificial present; and finally, what sort of a miserable people is this that changes its way of life at the drop of a hat! Of course, there can be no doubt that the life of not just one people, but of a large part of mankind may be changed by some spiritual or political revolution, that is, through some new understanding of those great matters that constitute the moral existence of man, or it may be changed through the violent destruction of the social structure. The annals of mankind are rich in examples of this kind. But nothing like that happened to us. We believe in the same things our ancestors believed in, we have the same superstitions they had; the same autocratic power, whose emergence was based on national principles, leads us along the path we have been destined to follow.

We are the same good, submissive, peasant people we were before. The seeds that Providence had sown on our soil have sprouted and grown into tall trees, become covered in leaves, then in fragrant blossom, and finally, have borne fruit. The process of our natural growth was not disrupted by any catastrophic events. We followed the necessary road to the necessary goal; we grew, developed, and finally matured. Much has disappeared from the rites particular to our people's way of life, but it disappeared, because it could no longer exist. It was not some arbitrary action that destroyed the rotten limbs of our social structure; they were destroyed by their own decay. Naturally, at the appointed time a will and an authority appeared that scattered all that was decayed; but this will and this authority sprang up from our soil, under our Orthodox skies, it grew out of the roots of Russian life, just like those excellent qualities of the Russian people, which previously had also always made it submit to the same will and the same authority. It may be that history knows of no other example of such a strictly logical development. A description of the beginnings of all that we see around us, the good and the evil, may easily be found in our chronicles; the root and cause of everything that, in the words of

our mentors, puts us in a position of such superiority vis-à-vis the other peoples of the world; all those countless advantages that we in their opinion enjoy over these peoples in the social sphere and in the realm of the spirit, are obvious. We need only glance at our tribal structure, delve into our beliefs and their wonderful affinity with that structure, for the marvelous achievement of our historical development to become illuminated by the brightest of lights. Thanks to the efforts of modern scholarship no one doubts any longer the gigantic degree to which our social life had developed in pre-Petrine times.

Everyone now knows that the Russian people, following the example of all the other branches of the great family to which it belongs, always took part in the governance of its country. On the first page of *the record of our existence* we find a striking instance of this. Not only the process of popular deliberation, on the basis of which it was decided to adopt the faith of Christ, but the very decision of the people were described by the chronicler: 'Vladimir sent heralds throughout the city proclaiming, "If any one does not accept baptism in the river next the morning, he will be my enemy." Hearing this, the people joyfully went there and joyfully said, "If this were not good, the Prince and his boyars would not have accepted it."'[4] And so it is obvious that we owe the introduction of Christianity in our country to the popular will. Throughout our history, on every step of our march we see the same phenomenon; always the popular will was expressed in this way; always the people's understanding existed and functioned in this way.

Aphorisms and Diverse Remarks[1] (1855)

You wish to create a Slavic world; why would the Tatars not think of creating in their turn a Tatar world? Compare the past destinies of the two races and you will see that the Tatars have more chance of success than you. As conquerors and as founders, they have provided their proofs. Mohammedanism, it is true, has no more life and so long as they will be Mohammedans they could not reappear on the world scene with brilliance, but one fine day let them convert to Christianity and you will see! A curious future promised to the universe! Two hemispheres, the Slavic hemisphere and the Tatar hemisphere. Pan-slavism and pan-tatarism henceforth become the two governing ideas of humanity. One must admit that there is a system there which admirably simplifies the progressive movement of human society.

People say: Russia belongs neither to Europe nor to Asia, it is a separate world. So be it, but one must prove that humanity, aside from these two faces characterized by the words, West and East, possesses yet a third face.

I prefer to wound my country, to afflict it, and to humiliate it rather than deceive it.

The Russian liberal is a silly fly which flutters in a ray of sunshine; this sun is the western sun.

Behind each object of nature there is something which attributes our mind and our imagination to it. It is this invisible thing which the artist should realize in his work, for it is precisely that which touches us, that which moves us, and not the very object of our contemplation.

Unfortunate is the nation which slavery could not degrade, it is made to be slavish.

"Exaggeration" said Count deMaistre,[2] "is the truth of honest people," i.e., people of conviction, for an honest man would not be without of it.

Malice is deadly to eloquence, at least as long as it does not provoke indignation or disdain.

There are faces which say "no", the man of conviction turns away from them instinctually.

There are natures deprived of the ability to affirm, who are afraid to pronounce the fatal "yes", like the young virgin whom the inexorable will of her parents has thrown into the arms of a detestable man.

The word only vibrates in sonorous places.

The word is a flower which blossoms only in congenial atmospheres.

Men who always speak well are never eloquent.

There are soils which are so sterile that even the sun of genius could not make fruitful.

It is evident that on the day when God accorded free will to man, he abdicated a portion of His authority in this world to make way for this new element in the universal economy. That is why one can and must ask Him unceasingly that His kingdom come on earth, i.e., that He deigns to re-establish the order of things in which the world found itself when the abuse of human liberty had not yet introduced evil here. But to ask Him, as some of our scholars would wish to do, that His kingdom come in heaven is absurd, since His kingdom was never interrupted, since we know that among the intelligences destined by their nature to inhabit heaven, those which disobeyed God were expelled from it. Other intelligences, enlightened by the ineffable light which illuminates all, never abused their liberty but marched always in the paths of God. One must add to that that, in the system in question, so long as the kingdom of God has not come, God reigns in no way at all, neither on earth nor in heaven. We like to believe that this consequence has not been foreseen by the devotees.

The good which Christianity did, say our scholars, if it ever did any, it was not at all obliged to do so, it was pure chance, it should act only on the individual, it has no reason to get mixed up with society or the human species. Humanity, according to them, marches towards its perdition and must thus march; Jesus Christ did not come and must not come to its aid. Once again Christianity addresses itself only to the individual; if it is useful to the human species that is inadvertent. Moreover, it barely concerns itself at all with earthly goods; it concentrates only upon those of heaven. The world must come to a state of complete disorganization, avoid stopping the movement which carries

the world to its ruin! Finally this sublime prayer, "Thy kingdom come", prescribed by the Savior, a prayer which summarizes in a way the entire social idea of the Christian doctrine, should be, in this system, only an indiscrete wish which should never be realized. It is clear that the point of view of an exaggerated or little enlightened asceticism basically scarcely differs at all or very little from that of disbelievers who themselves also deny the benefits of Christianity or who consider the benefits only as an involuntary result of this religion for the very good reason that earthly interests do not concern it.

There are people who fashion a heart with their head; there are others who fashion a head with their heart. The latter succeed better than the former, because there is more intelligence in feeling than there is feeling in intelligence.

Religion begins by believing in the thing which it wishes to know, this is the procedure of faith. Science believes in a thing only after having recognized it in a series of identical facts, this is the process of induction. But both, as is seen, came to the same result, to knowledge, by different routes.

Religion is the knowledge of God, science is the knowledge of the universe. But it can be said with even more reason that religion learns to know God in His being and science in His works. In this way both end at God.

There are two distinct things in science; its content and its product, its procedure and its method. So there is a matter of setting up its relationship with nature, one must clearly indicate if one wishes to speak about the very substance of science or about its manner; and that is what is scarcely ever done.

There is nothing easier than to love people whom one loves, but one must also love a little those whom one does not love.

There are three ways of being happy: think only about God, think only about one's neighbor, think only about an idea.

In the moral order, one does not march for the pleasure of marching; there must be a goal. To deny the possibility of arriving at perfection, i.e., to attain the goal amounts very simply at rendering movement impossible.

There are three ways of conceiving of God, firstly as Creator of the universe and thus its absolute master; this is *God the Father*. Then, as spirit or intelligence, acting upon spirits or by intelligences, this is the *Holy Spirit*. Finally, as identified with the human being and being manifest directly in the human spirit, this is *God the Son*. As is seen, there are then three persons in the same God, since each of them He is contained completely. Serious instincts of the human spirit have always conceived of the divinity in this way, but it was reserved for Christianity to formulate the vague feeling of humanity in an absolute way and to introduce it into the human logical conscience, as an integral element of its substance. So far from being an indecipherable mystery, the dogma of the Trinity is, on the contrary, one of the clearest axioms of revitalized reason.

There are people who never do anything of good for the sole pleasure of doing good. What is surprising is the fact that they are not able to conceive of the absolute good, that they understand, as they say, only relative good? The

understanding of perfection is only given to those who tend towards it with the aim of approaching it.

It is not men who swing between the true and the false, rope-dancers who make society march, but it is men of principles. So the logic of the middle way can only serve to make society last a certain time, but it could never make society advance one step. Fruitfulness is only in the fanaticism for perfection, only in the passion for the truth and the beautiful.

Penal laws propose now only to preserve the city but they also have as a goal the greatest perfection possible for the human being. These two ends are marvelously reconcilable. More than that, one could not be achieved without the other. Hence criminal legislation is not only destined to safeguard the society from an internal enemy, but also to develop the sense of justice. It is from this point of view that all penal laws should be considered including the pain of death itself which is only a formidable lesson, whose efficacity is unfortunately very doubtful, but in no way a renumeration.

Nobody does not know that Christianity was since its birth exposed to very lively attacks and that it was at the bosom of this intense, passionate, intelligent fight that Christianity arose to the domination of the world. However, in our day there are some people who wish to see in Christ's religion only a myth.[3] But, where has one ever seen a myth being formed in a setting and under similar conditions? It is true that people add that it is not in the civilized part of the pagan world that the Christian legend came to see the light of day, that it was brought there only much later, that it first spread only among the less enlightened group, among Jews, among ignorant populations and ones very disposed to accepting the most absurd beliefs.

Nothing is more false than that. On the contrary we see Christianity since the first century mount to the summit of society and establish itself there just as soon amid the most eminent intellects. Others teach us that Christianity is nothing but a Jewish sect, that all its morality is found contained in the Old Testament, that Jesus Christ only added to it a small number of ideas generally disseminated in his time. One must admit that this last point of view, however little Christian it is, offers however something which can, in a way, satisfy rational Christianity if not positive Christianity. Is it, in effect, a completely human thing to give to all these scattered and powerless truths, life, reality, the power to destroy a world, to erect another, to combine this mass of isolated ideas, diverse doctrines into a homogeneous whole, an all-powerful compact doctrine, fruitful in innumerable ways, containing in itself the principle of progress without end, to translate to the world all that there was of moral truths into a language accessible to all intellects, finally to render Good and the True realizable? An admirable thing! Even reduced to these shabby proportions, the great phenomenon of Christianity still bears such a mark of a spontaneous act of supreme reason that all the imaginable skills of human logic could not succeed in explaining it in their own way.

There are three invincible things: genius, virtue and birth.

Nothing demonstrates the insufficiency of the philosophical methods better than the ethnographic study of languages. Isn't it evident that neither observation, nor analysis, nor induction played any part in the formation of these great instruments of human intelligence? No one is able to say what is the process which a people utilized in order to create its language. But is is certain that this procedure was not any of those which we make use of in our logical functions. It was only a synthesis from one end to the other. Nothing more ingenious, more wise, more profound that the diverse combinations which a people use in their infancy in order to express ideas which preoccupy them, that they need to cast into life, and at the same time nothing is more mysterious. It can no longer be doubted that human primitive language did not come into the world in one single jet, for the very simple reason that, without words, no means of thinking. But how were formed these groups, these families of idioms which the world shares today, that is what our linguistic philosophers will never succeed in teaching us. However, it is at the basis of these astonishing phenomena that the most fruitful methods of the human mind are hidden and consequently the methods which it should above all else be well acquainted with.

You wish to be happy, don't you? Very well, think in the least possible way about your own felicity. Occupy yourself with that of others. I bet a thousand to one that you will be as happy as it is possible to be.

Everyone knows that after Kant the task of reason is reduced to a kind of perpetual verification of our own perceptions. We only know, according to him, we only see our own being. All that is hence possible for us to do is to react upon ourselves. One can readily see that the human mind could scarcely remain there, anymore than it could, a little later, be content with the point of view of Fichte, which is basically nothing but an exaggerated development of critical philosophy.

Moreover this apotheosis of the "me", begun by Kant, achieved by Fichte was destined necessarily to push human reason into a frightful space and to force it to fear being reduced one day forever to the *absolute identity* of Schelling, i.e., to implore aid and help from something which was outside of itself, which was not itself. Unfortunately it is to nature that human reason addressed itself and more unfortunately still it ended by confounding itself with nature. And there is where human reason is today, despite all the works of speculative philosophy, despite all the more or less subtle distinctions which it tried to establish. So what remains to do now is, while profiting from the things acquired by the human spirit, to go back to the feet of the Eternal. Such is the mission devolved upon philosophy in our day and we believe that it is acquitting itself not too badly, all the while perhaps not realizing the significance of the work which it accomplishes.

A powerless enemy is the best of our friends, a jealous enemy is the cruelest of our enemies.[4]

The question of the human race has become for us a question of the day ever since we set ourselves the task of fabricating a new nationality. The point of

view of the devotees is very curious. The entire philosophy of history is reduced by them to a physiological classification of the great human families. From that they derive an entire series of more or less unanticipated results concerning the social development of humanity, concerning the march of the human spirit, concerning the future of the world. But, like all ideas, however abstract they may be, become impregnated in our day with a kind of material actuality, those ideas do not fail to satisfy a need of the times by becoming involved in politics a little. Unfortunately all this work is taking place far from the sources of civilization from which fertile ideas come.

The triumph of this kind of revolution to the profit of a race which has figured on the world scene only in a passive way, is a little bit doubtful. No matter what, that is an interesting fact not without importance for the subsequent march of enlightenment. Consequently it is good to point it out for meditation by serious minds and to seek to characterize it.

That races exist is admitted by everyone. That they bestowed their necessary elements upon the mass of intellects spread out on the earth's surface, no one disputes any more. But it is evident that it is no longer a matter of that which is the case now; the case now is to know whether races should always exist, whether one must strive for a general fusion of all people, or if, on the contrary, the Mongol must remain forever Mongol, the Malayan forever Malayan, the negro forever negro, the Slav forever Slav? In one word, whether one must march forward on the route traced by the Bible which knows no other race than the human race or whether one must make humanity go back, to return it to the point from which it started, where it was when the word humanity had not ever been invented, that is to say, whether one must fall back all the way to the times of paganism? The truth is that this entire local philosophy which occupies itself only in classifying people phrenologically and philologically is only good for nourishing national antipathies, for creating some new frontiers among countries, and the fact is that it tends at something completely different from making a people of brothers from the human species.

The real is not the material undoubtedly, for every true idea, where it be incarnated or not in matter, is not any the less real at all because of that. But one must not forget that what is perfectly real, also possesses by that fact itself the ability to become materialized, given that the perfect reality also contains within it the form in which it should be produced in the open. For example, such is the case for every mathematical axiom, for every absolute truth. Such was the case for the Christian truth before it became manifested to the world. Finally, such is the case of God's kingdom, perfect reality but not yet materialized.

If you do not wish to admit either the necessity or the possibility of God's kingdom on earth as the end and final phase of the progress of society, you could not admit this progress either. You fall back into the fatal circle in which all ancient civilization fell into ruin, in which necessarily the entire human society, like Rome, its most perfect emblem before Christianity fell in ruins. To go back to this point of view is hence nothing more or less but to abjure Christianity, the philosophy of life par excellence.

You have the form of knowledge and its content. You have the subjective fact and the objective fact, the *me* and the *non-me*. It is a matter of reconciling all that. All philosophical systems have attempted this work, either with the more or less vague feeling for the thing or else without their own knowledge. Philosophy in our day acts with a perfect awareness of the goal which it proposes for itself, and that is what distinguishes philosophy today from all those which proceeded it.

Without implicit faith in abstract perfection there is no way to make a step towards realizable perfection. It is only our condition of believing in impossible good that we can approach possible good. Without this luminous point which shines before us from afar, we could not advance one foot amid the profound darkness which surround us. Every time that this twinkling light is eclipsed, one must stop and wait until it reappears on the obscure horizon. It is on the road which leads to absolute perfection that all the small perfections which men can aspire to, are to be found.

COMMENTARIES AND NOTES TO THE BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

1. The best book containing biographical materials on Chaadaev is still Charles Quénet's. *Tchaadaev et les lettres philosophiques* (Paris, 1931). See also Mikhail O. Gershenzon, *P. Ya. Chaadaev: Zhizn i myshlenie* (St. Petersburg, 1908); Alexander von Schelting, *Russland und Europa im russischen Geschichtsdenken* (Bern, 1948); Martin Winkler, *Peter Jakolevic Caadaev, Ein Beitrag zur russischen Geistesgeschichte des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Berlin-Koenigsberg, 1928); Heinrich Falk, *Das Weltbild Peter J. Tschaadajews nach seinen acht "Philosophischen Briefen"* (Munich, 1954); Eugene Moskoff, *The Russian Philosopher Chaadayev, His Ideas and His Epoch*, Columbia University dissertation (New York, 1937); P. S. Shkurinov, *P. Ia. Chaadaev. Zhizn, Deiatelnost, Mirovozzrenie* (Moscow, 1960).

2. Mikhail N. Longinov (1823-1875), a contemporary of Chaadaev's favored the year 1793 as Chaadaev's birthdate. See his articles: "Nekrolog Petra Iakovlevicha Chaadaeva 1793-1856," *Sovremennik*, Vol. LVIII, Section 5, 1856; "Sovremennaia Letopis," *Russkii Vestnik*, Vol. II, 1860, p. 153; "Vospominania o P. Ia. Chaadaeve," *Russkii Vestnik*, Vol. XI, 1862. Dmitri N. Sverbeev (1799-1874), who knew Chaadaev personally, wrote a long article about him in *Russkii Arkhiv*, Vol. VI, 1868, pp. 976-1001; in this article he stated that Chaadaev was born in the first years of the "final decade of the eighteenth century"; this same article was republished at the end of the second volume of Sverbeev's memoirs entitled *Zapiski D. N. Sverbeeva*, Vol. II (St. Petersburg, 1899), pp. 235 ff. However, Sverbeev's book is filled with factual errors, so that all his statements have to be checked against other source materials. Mikhail I. Zhikharev, Chaadaev's nephew, given 1796 as the year in which Chaadaev was born; see his "P. Ia. Chaadaev, Iz Vospominani Sovremennika," *Vestnik Evropy*, Vols. VII and IX, 1871. Mikhail Lemke set Chaadaev's birthdate as May 27, 1793, in his article on Chaadaev which appeared in *Mir Bozhii*, Vol. IX, 1905, p. 2. See also M. Lemke, *Nikolaevskie Zhandarmy i literatura, 1825-1855* (St. Petersburg, 1908), p. 362. Gershenzon fixed the date as May 27, 1794, in his biography *P. Ya. Chaadaev: Zhizn i myshlenie*, p. 4. Vasilii Chistiakov's articel "K biografi Petra Iakovlevicha Chaadaeva," *Russkaia Starina*, Vol. 8, 1907, pp. 333-334, added new evidence but did not clear up the controversy. See also A. V. Zvenigorodskoi "Regestr roda Chaadaevykh," *Sbornik Nizhegorodskoi Universiteta. Arkhivnyi Komissii*, Vol. VIII, Part 3, pp. 400-403. Details on this question are to be found in Quénet, pp. lxv-lxviii.

3. Quénet, pp. lviii-lxiii.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 3.

5. Zhikharev, Vol. VII, p. 181.

6. In *Russkaia Starina*, Chistiakov claimed that in *Moskovskie Vedomosti*, No. 54, 1808, he found the names of Mikhail and Peter Chaadaev inscribed on the books of the University in September, 1808. See Chistiakov, p. 334.

7. Dmitri Shakhovskoi, "P. Ia. Chaadaev na puti v Rossiiu v 1826 g." *Literaturnoe nasledstvo*, Vols. 19-21 (Moscow, 1935), p. 31. Hereafter referred to as *Lit. nasled.*

8. *Ibid.*

9. There have been conflicting accounts of the Troppau incident. Sverbeev's biographical article (cited above) is full of error. He claimed that Chaadaev procrastinated during the trip from St. Petersbury to Troppau and that Chaadaev was dismissed from the army because of this. Longinov (cited above) proved this false and showed that Chaadaev was actually in line for a promotion to aide-de-camp of Emperor Alexander himself. On January 2, 1821, Chaadaev wrote to his aunt: "The fact is that I was supposed to be appointed aide-de-camp to the emperor upon his return, at least that is what Vasilchikov said; I considered it more amusing to scorn this favor, rather than to receive it. It was amusing to show my scorn to people who scorn everybody. So there you are, all that is extraordinarily simple." P. Ia. Chaadaev, "Letter to Princess Anna Mikhailovna Scherbatova, January 2, 1821," *Sochineniia i Pisma P. Ia. Chaadaeva*, Gershenzon edition, Vol. I (Moscow, 1913), p. 4. Hereafter referred to as Chaadaev, *Soch.* (Gersh. ed.). This statement explains the request for discharge well enough, but it does not clarify why Chaadaev was not advanced in grade upon discharge, as was usual in cases of this type.

10. Shakhovskoi, "Neizdannye Filosoficheskie Pisma P. Ia. Chaadaeva," *Lit. nasled.*, Vols. 22-24, (Moscow, 1935), p. 13.

11. Shakhovskoi, *Lit. nasled.*, Vols. 19-21, pp. 16-33; also B. M. Fikh "P. Ia. Chaadaev v Brest," *Istoriia* SSSR, Vol. I (Moscow, 1958), p. 177.

12. N. Golitsyn, "Chaadaev i E. A. Sverbeeva," *Vestnik Evropy*, no. 1/4 (Petrograd, 1918), pp. 233.250.

13. *Ibid.*

14. See Chaadaev, *Soch.* (Gersh. ed.), Vol. I, pp. 61-239.

15. Alexander S. Pushkin, "Letter of July 6, 1831 to Chaadaev," *Sochineniia Pushkina*, V. I. Saitova edition (St. Petersburg, 1906-1911), Vol. II, p. 268. See also A. S. Pushkin, *Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenii*, Vol. X (Moscow-Leningrad, 1951), p. 174, note 424.

16. The newly found documentation in the manuscript secton of the Institute of Russian Literature (Pushkinski Dom) in Leningrad substantiates this fact. Professor Kirpichnikov found an official document relating to this in the Riumiantsev Museum in Moscow. The document was dated January 31, 1833. The committee on censorship from the Troitski Academy read Letters VI and VII and found that the former letter showed an adverse interpretation of the Russian orthodox religion and the latter letter presented Moses not as a man sent from God, but simply as a great lawgiver. For these and other reasons the committee refused to allow these letters to be published. See A. Kirpichnikov "P. Ia. Chaadaev (po novym dokumentam)," *Russkaia Mysl*, No. 4, 1896, pp. 142-155. Among the Chaadaev papers at the Institute of Russian Literature, after the manuscript of Letter VIII there is a summary of it entitled "Courte analyse et Extraits des Lettres Philosophiques." The "objectionable" sections in all the "Philosophical Letters" are cited there by some unknown censor. In that document among other points, Chaadaev's works are found to contain arguments of liberalism, "St. Simonianism converted to Christianity," and heterodox Christian views; other statements are branded anti-Orthodox and pro-Catholic. Sobranie Dashkova, 93/3/1355, Manuscript Division, Institute of Russian Literature, Academy of the U.S.S.R., Leningrad.

17. Lemke, p. 428.

18. *Ibid.*, pp. 426-428, 443.

19. After the publication of "The First Philosophical Letter," Count Benckendorf prepared the following note for the governor-general of Moscow, Prince Golitsyn (Tsar Nicholas I added "very good" in his own handwriting to the text): The periodical *Telescope* had published in its last issue (No. 15) an article entitled "The Philosophical Letter," its author is Mr. Cheodaev [sic] who resides in Moscow. This article, undoubtedly already known to your Excellency, has aroused universal amazement among the inhabitants of Moscow. The author speaks of Russia, of the Russian people, their ideas, religion, and history with such contempt that it is inconceivable how a Russian could degrade himself to such an extent as to write things of that sort. But the residents of our ancient capital, always known for their clear, common sense and filled with the feeling of the dignity of the Russian nation, have at once realized that such an article could not have been written by a compatriot of theirs fully in possession of a sound mind and therefore - as we are informed - they not only did not turn their indignation against Mr. Cheodaev, but, on the contrary, they expressed their sincere regret on account of the mental derangement with which he was affected and which was the only reason for writing such nonsense. News has been received here that the sympathy on account of Mr. Cheodaev's unfortunate condition is shared by the entire Moscow public. It is therefore His Imperial Majesty's wish that your Excellency undertake the necessary means to supply Mr. Cheodaev with medical care and attention. His Imperial Majesty orders you to entrust an able physician with Mr. Cheodaev's treatment and instruct the physician to visit Mr. Cheodaev absolutely every morning. An order should also be issued to the effect that Mr. Cheodaev should not expose himself to the harmful influence of the present damp and cold weather, in short that all necessary steps be taken to have his health improved. His Imperial Majesty wants you to send him a monthly reprot on Mr. Cheodaev's condition. Cited in Lemke, pp. 412-413.

20. Zhikharev, Vol. IX, p. 31.

21. *Ibid.*

22. A. Tseitlin, *Russkaia literatura pervoi poloviny, XIX-ogo veka* (Moscow, 1940), p. 245.

23. Herzen wrote:

> That letter was in a sense the last word, the dividing point. It was a shot that rang out in the dark night; whether it was something perishing that proclaimed its end, whether it was a signal or a cry for help, whether it heralded the dawn or foretold that it would never be - anyway, it forced all to awaken.
>
> What, one may wonder, is the significance of two or three pages publised in a monthly review? And yet such is the strength of utterance, such is the power of the spoken word in a land of silence, unaccustomed to free speech, that Chaadaev's letter shook all thinking Russia. And well it might. There had been nothing written since *Woe from Wit* which made so powerful an impression. Between that play and the letter there had been ten years of silence, the Fourteenth of December, the gallows, penal servitude, Nicholas.

A. Herzen.*Memoirs* (trans. Constance Garnett) Vol. II, Part IV. (London, 1927), pp. 261-262. *Woe from Wit* is the title of a famous play by Alexander Griboedov. The Fourteenth of December refers to the Decembrist uprising of 1825.

24. Similar relaxations took place in the case of the actions taken against the other men involved in the *Telescope* scandal. The censor Boldyrev who had passed on the "First Philosophical Letter" supposedly while playing cards, though dismissed, was allowed to pay a fine of 1,000 rubles, in order to restore himself to full rights for a complete pension. Nikolai Nadezhdin (1802-1856), though exiled to Vologda, was pardoned within a year and received back into government service. He even served as Director of the *Journal of the Ministry of Public Education* later in life. See Quénet, p. 257.

25. Chaadaev, *Soch.* (Gersh. ed.), Vol. I, pp. 288-304. See also Shakhovskoi, "Proekt Proklamatsi Chaadaeva," *Lit. nasled.*, Vol 22-24, pp. 679-682.

26. Quénet, p. 388.

27. According to Professor Chistiakov, in the baptismal and birth records of the Moscow Ecclesiastical Consistory, in No. 131914 one find the following:

> In the baptismal and birth book of the Moscow Peter-Paul Church on Novaia Basmannaia Street, 1856, No. 6, is written: April 14 the retired captain Peter Iakovlevich Chaadaaev died, in the house of the foreigner Shultz, 62 years of age, from an inflammation. The parish priest Nicholas Sergeevski heard his confession and gave him communion; he also performed the burial service. . . . Chistiakov, pp. 333-335.

28. Aleksei S. Khomiakov, *Sochinenia A. S. Khomiakova*, Lebedev edition (Moscow, 1878) p. 768.

COMMENTAIRES AND NOTES TO THE ANALYSIS OF CHAADAEV'S IDEAS

1. The tendency to characterize Chaadaev's thought through the use of old socio-political terminology has led to two "legends." One group of writers had held that Chaadaev was a revolutionary thinker and the other that he was a reactionary thinker. It was Chaadaev's contemporary Alexander Herzen who placed Chaadaev in the revolutionary camp. See Alexander Ivanovich Herzen, "Du développement des idées révolutionnaires en Russie," *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii i pisem.* Lemke edition (Petrograd, 1919 ff.), Vol. VI, p. 317. This same line of thought was taken up by Georgii Plekhanov in "Pessimizm kak otrazhenie ekonomicheskoi deistvitelnosti," *Sochineniia*, Vol. X, 2nd edition (Moscow-Leningrad, 1925), pp. 133-162. The Herzen appraisal has been carried to extremes by Soviet writers. Nikolai Alekseev proclaimed that the First Philosophical Letter contained "in embryo the entire Russian Revolution, the whole of communism, and the International"; see *Russkoe zapadnichestvo* (Moscow, 1929). The standard Soviet line is to treat Chaadaev as an advocate of bourgeois freedom. By "advocate of bourgeois freedom" the Soviets mean that Chaadaev was against serfdom and tsarist absolutism. In his article "Chaadaev i ego filosoficheskie pisma," *Pod znamenem marksizma*, Vol. I (January, 1938) p. 38, V. Soloviev took this line and also emphasized the "social" aspects of Chaadaev's religious thought. See also M. K. Afanasev, "Obshchestvennopoliticheskie vzglyady P. Ia. Chaadaeva," *Trudy voronezhskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta*, Vol. XIV (1947), pp. 141-156; F. P. Berelevich, "P. Ia. Chaadaev i Dekabristy," *Uchenye zapiski tiumenskogo pedagogicheskogo instituta*, Vol V (Tiumen, 1958), pp. 157-178; and M. M. Grigorian, "Chaadaev i ego filosoficheskaya sistema," *Sbornik. Iz istorii filosofi* (Moscow, 1958), pp. 126-183. An outdated Soviet effort is a monograph by P. S. Shkurinov, *P. Ia. Chaadaev. Zhizn, deiatelnost i mirovozzrenie* (Moscow, 1960); it is mainly a polemic against Western historians' work on Chaadaev; the major virtue of the work consists in specific references to unpublished source materials on Chaadaev - there Chaadaev is depicted as a "progressive, aristocratic revolutionary."

The opposite "legend" of Chaadaev as a reactionary was fostered by Alexander N. Pypin who wrote: "In a word, alongside the contemporary movements of European thought, Chaadaev's theory appears close to the Catholic doctrine which was more a reactionary than a progressive one"; *Kharakteristiki literaturnykh mnenii ot dvadtsatykh do piatidesiatykh godov*, 4th edition (St. Petersburg, 1909), p. 189. Paul Milyukov supported this thesis by tracing the influence of the ultramontanist de Maistre and especially de Bonald in Chaadaev's works; *Glavnyia techeniia russkoi istoricheskoi mysli,* 3rd edition, (St. Petersburg, 1913), pp. 323-342. But it was Mikhail O. Gershenzon who tried to lay to rest the "legend" of Chaadaev as a revolutionary once and for all. Unfortunately in so doing Gershenzon constructed yet another "legend" about Chaadaev; Gershenzon thought that he saw in Chaadaev a Roman Catholic manqué and social mystic. *P. Ia. Chaadaeva: Zhizn i myshlenie* (St. Petersburg, 1908).

Most Western historians have been hampered by lack of contact with all the manuscript materials in Russian archives: the most scholarly and exhaustive treatment is the Herculean biographical study of Charles Quénet, *Tchaadaev et les*

lettres philosphiques (Paris, 1931). Quénet gathered much material from the archives, but unfortunately copies of the five newly discovered "Philosophical Letters" reached him at a very late stage in his research, so that he devoted only two pages to a summary of their contents. Quénet's appraisal of Chaadaev is vague and ambiguous, but all scholars are indebted to him for his meticulous spadework on biographical materials. All other works by historians have depended upon Russian translations of the documents presented by Shakhovskoi; see Alexander von Schelting, *Russland und Europa im russischen Geschichtsdenken* (Bern, 1948); v. Zenkovski, *A History of Russian Philosophy*, trans. George Kline (New York, 1953); Alexandre Koyré, *Etudes sur l'histoire de las pensée philosophique en Russie* (Paris, 1950). Heinrich Falk *Das Weltbild Peter J. Tschaadajews nach seinen acht "Philosophischen Briefen"* Munich, 1954 also labored under the handicap of inaccessibility of the original French texts of the "Philosophical Letters." Falk basically supported the Gershenzon interpretation of Chaadaev.

Two recent works on Russian intellectual history have cast doubts upon the "Christian" nature of Chaadaev's insights. Georgii Florovski has stated that "Chaadaev's image has remained unclear up to this time. And the most unclear fact in him is his religiosity"; *Puti russkogo bogosloviia* (Paris, 1937) p. 247. To Florovski, Chaadaev is "an ideologue not a member of the church. That is the cause of a certain strange obscurity in his historical schema" (p. 248). Peter Scheibert has branded Chaadaev's philosophy of history as "Historiosophia" and "definitely a post-Christian ideology"; *Von Bakunin zu Lenin. Geschichte der russischen revolutionären Ideologien, 1840-1895*, Vol. I (Leiden, 1956).

The terms *revolutionary, reactionary, mystic, progressive,* and *post-Christian ideologue* are not useful in clarifying Chaadaev's thought. This is why I have applied terms which seem more in keeping with Chaadaev's own aims and ideals. By "utopian" in this context I mean one who believes in the possibility of social regeneration and the perfectibility of society. By "religious" I refer to one who believes religion to be the basis for this social regeneration, and by "social and cultural" I mean one who emphasizes the necessity for establishing proper material conditions in society in order for men to progress intellectually and spiritually.

2. Gershenzon termed Chaadaev a "social mystic," but he based his major argument on the *Memoire zur Geistkunde*, which he attributed to Chaadaev. In reality, as Shakhovskoi has shown conclusively, the mystic journal was not written by Chaadaev but by the Moscow doctor, D. A. Obleukhov (See *Literaturnoe nasledstvo*, Vol. 22-24 [Moscow, 1935], p. 12).

Gershenzon concluded that "by the kingdom of God is meant not the general welfare and not the triumph of the moral law but solely and undoubtedly the inner fusion of mankind with God"; *P. Ia. Chaadaev: Zhizn i myshlenie*, p. 76. But Chaadaev's own words contradict this opinion; in writing to Alexander Ivanovich Turgenev, Chaadaev emphasized the real effects of religion upon concrete material conditions: *"Le principe du catholicisme est un principe d'action, un principe social avant tout"*; in a letter to Circourt Chaadaev wrote: *"Il ne s'agit ici que de notre dévéloppement social."* Chaadaev's kingdom of God was not to be a mystical fusion of man with God but a concrete materialization in society. As Koyré put it: "It is God's reign on earth, not the heavenly kingdom, which is at the center of Chaadaev's thought"; *La Pensée philosophique en Russie*, p. 37.

3. Pypin, p. 192.

4. On Official Nationality see Nicholas Riasanovsky, *Nicholas I and Official Nationality in Russia, 1825-1855* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1959).

5. Nikolai Karamzin wrote:

> Situated in the depths of the north, rearing her head between Asiatic and European kingdoms, Russian society contained elements derived from both these parts of the world. It was a compound of ancient customs of the East, carried to Europe by the Slavs and reactivated, so to say, by our long connection with the Mongols; of Byzantine custom which we had adopted together with Christianity; and of certain German customs, imparted to us by the Normans. *Memoir on Ancient and Modern Russia*, translated by Richard Pipes (Cambridge, Mass., 1959), p. 110.

6. Chaadaev's view could be contrasted with the contemporary views of Official Nationalists such as Shevyrev or Pogodin, or else those of the pre-Slavophile, Vladimir Odoevski, the leading light of the *Liubomudrye*. The theory of "young Russia" as the possible savior of "old Europe" can be found in the idealist circles of the 1820's. See P. Sakulin, *Iz russkogo idealizma* (Moscow, 1913), pp. 613-614. Florovski suggests that Odoevskii might have influenced Chaadaev in this line of thinking (p. 248).

7. See Alexandre Koyré, "Russia's Place in the World: Peter Chaadayev and the Slavophils," *The Slavonic Review*, March, 1927, pp. 594-608.

8. See Chaadaev's long attack on the anti-Petrine school in his *Apologia of a Madman*. Professor Riasanovsky in characterizing the Slavophile movement wrote: "The Slavophile denunciation of Peter the Great came to be regarded as the watchword of the movement, as its most characteristic triat and as its main contrast with the Westernizers"; *Russian and the West in the Teachings of the Slavophiles* (Cambridge, Mass., 1952), p. 80.

COMMENTARIES AND NOTES TO THE PHILOSOPHICAL LETTERS:
N. B. Chaadaev's own notes are placed in brackets

Letter I

1. A letter written by Ekaterina D. Panova to Peter Chaadaev in which she expressed her religious anxieties and also her fears that Chaadaev had suspicions about her real motives in talking with him about religious topics. Since Panova's letter is a help in understanding the text of "The First Philosophical Letter," the following is a translation of it from the original French text; the Gershenzon edition left out the postscript. Unfortunately the letter is not dated. The original is in the manuscript division of the Lenin library in the collection Zhikharev i Chaadaev. M.S.1032/41, "Pisma Panovoi, Ekaterini Dmitrievni k Chaadaevu, Petru Yakovlevichu:"

> For quite a long time, sir, I longed to write to you, the fear of being troublesome, the idea that you no longer have any interest in what concerns me, made me hesitate, but at least I have nonetheless resolved to send you this letter which will probably be the last which you will receive from me. Unfortunately I see that I have lost the good will which you showed to me before; you believe, I know, that there was some fakery on my part in the desire which I manifested to you to instruct myself in religious subject matter: I find this thought intolerable. Undoubtedly I have many faults, but never, I assure you, has the idea of pretending ever had a place in my heart for a moment. I saw you so entirely absorbed in religious ideas that it is my admiration, my profound esteem for your character, which inspired in me the need to devote myself to the same thoughts as you. It was with all the warmth, all the enthusiasm of my character that I gave myself over to sentiments which were so new to me. In hearing you speak, I believed; it seemed to me in these moments that nothing was missing for my complete belief, but then when I found myself alone, I got my doubts back; I experienced remorse for inclining towards the Catholic faith; I told myself that I had no conviction other than that of repeating to myself that you could not be wrong - this was really what made the greatest impression upon my belief and this motive was purely human. Believe me, Sir, when I assure you that all these different emotions which I do not have the strength to abate have *considerably* altered my health; I was in a continual state of agitation and always dissatisfied with myself, I must have appeared extravagant and exaggerated to you very often .... you naturally have a lot of severity in your character .... I noted that lately you have removed yourself even more from our society, but I did not guess your motive. A word which you spoke to my husband enlightened me on this matter. I could not tell you how much I suffered in thinking of the opinion which you gave of me; it was the cruel but just punishment for the disdain which I have always had for the opinion of the world .... But it is time to finish this letter; may it be able to attain its goal, that of convincing you that I have not pretended anything, that I did not think to play a role in order to merit your friendship, that if I have lost your esteem, nothing in the world could compensate me for this loss, not even the sentiment that I have done nothing

which could have brought this misfortune upon me. Farewell, Sir; if you would write me a few words in response, I would be very happy, but I really do not dare to expect any.

P.S. My husband is sorry that he cannot return the money to you right away; he is doing all that he can to obtain it, but I doubt whether he will succeed before a month or six weeks pass.

2. John 27:20-21.
3. Chaadaev probably refers to his ideas of the early history of the Eastern Slavs.
4. The early Kievan period.
5. The period of the Tatar yoke.
6. The Muscovite period of Russian history. In this last assumption, Chaadaev apparently held that the Muscovite autocratic form of government grew out of the Tatar rule in Russia.
7. Peter the Great (1682-1725) introduced a series of reforms aimed at "Westernization" of the Russian gentry and the Russian form of government.
8. Alexander I (1801-1825); the reference is to Russia's participation in the wars against Napoleon and to the march of Russian troops into Paris on April 1, 1814.
9. The Decembrist uprising in 1825. A group of Russian nobles, inspired by western European rationalist ideas, led a revolt against tsardom which failed.
10. The migration of the barbarians in the early Middle Ages and the spread of Christianity. To Chaadaev "modern civilization" means "Christian civilization," i.e., European history since the birth of Christ.
11. In the late tenth century, the Russian ruler Vladimir officially adopted Byzantine Christianity.
12. [Photius] For information on Photius and the temporary, supposed "split" of Eastern and Western Church, see Francis Dvornik, *The Photian Schism* (Cambridge, England, 1948).
13. During the period of the Tatar yoke, Russia lay under Mongol domination from 1240 to 1480.
14. The gradually increasing imposition of serfdom upon the Russian peasant after the end of the Mongol Yoke with the rise of the Muscovite state in the sixteenth century.
15. The flowering of mediaeval culture in western Europe during the late Middle Ages.
16. The Renaissance.
17. The Pope in Rome.
18. In Chaadaev's *Weltanschauung*, Russia had had no Middle Ages like those of Western Europe; furthermore, Russia had had no Renaissance, because she had been completely out of contact with western European culture at the time.
19. Torquato Tasso (1554-1595) wrote the famous epic poem *La Gerusalemme Liberata* which dealt with the Crusades.
20. Chaadaev refers to the initial history of the spread of Christianity as the first epoch of "modern," that is, Christian, civilization, the period up to about the fifth century.
21. Roughly the period from the sixth to the tenth century.
22. Roughtly the tenth and eleventh centuries.
23. Roughly the twelfth, thirteenth, and fourteenth centuries.
24. The period before and after the Protestant Reformation; the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

25. The eighteenth century Rationalists held this interpretation. Chaadaev is probably thinking of Voltaire's opinion of the Middle Ages. See especially Voltaire's *Essai sur les moeurs* which was found in Chaadaev's personal library.
26. Another reference to eighteenth-century Rationalism and its view of mediaeval history.
27. The English revolution in the latter half of the seventeenth century. In the first volume of his *Histoire de Charles Ier*, the French historian Guizot, whom Chaadaev admired, undoubtedly gave Chaadaev the inspiration for this interpretation. In the Chaadaev manuscript at the top of the page on which these phrases are found, there is a citation in Russian which reads "in Russian in the translation *Cromwell and Charles I.*"
28. [1829] The Catholic Emancipation Act of 1829 which extended political liberty, including the right to vote, to Roman Catholics in England.
29. The city of the dead, i.e., Moscow.

Letter II

1. These images are to be found in Plato's Dialogues, in particular, the *Phaedrus* and the *Symposium*. In the *Phaedrus* Socrates exclaims:

> By here, a fair resting-place, full of summer sounds and scents. Here is this lofty and spreading plane-tree, and the agnus castus high and clustering, in the fullest blossom and the greatest fragrance; and the stream which flows beneath the plane-tree is deliciously cold to the feet. Judging from the ornaments and images, this must be a spot sacred to Achelous and the Nymphs. How delightful is the breeze: so very sweet; and there is a sound in the air shrill and summerlike which makes answer to the chorus of the cicadae. But the greatest charm of all is the grass, like a pillow gently sloping to the head. My dear Phaedrus, you have been an admirable guide. *The Works of Plato*, selected and edited by Irwin Edman (New York: Modern Library, Random House, 1928), p. 267.

In the *Symposium* one finds: "Socrates took his place on the couch, and supped with the rest; and then libations were offered, and after a hymn had been sung to the god, and there had been the usual ceremonies, they were about to commence drinking . . . ." (*The Works of Plato*, p. 338). Chaadaev's private library, partially preserved in the Lenin Library, Moscow, contains a German translation of Plato's works with commentary by Schleiermacher. See also Shakhovskoi, *Literaturnoe nasledstvo*, Vol. 22-24 (Moscow, 1935).

2. "Sleep."
3. Chaadaev definitively attacks serfdom in Russia.
4. See the first paragraphs of "The First Philosophical Letter."
5. Aristotle's *Politics*, Book I, Chapters 4-6.
6. Boris Godunov was regent from 1587 to 1598, during the latter reign of Fedor Ivanovich. When the male line of the Riurik dynasty died out with the death of Tsar Fedor Ivanovich in 1598, Boris Godunov ruled as tsar from 1598 to 1605. Vasili Ivanovich Shuiskii seized the throne in 1606 and ruled until 1610. Ivan IV had set a legal prohibition on the movement of peasants during economically critical years. Boris Godunov and Vasili Shuiskii added further restrictions which contributed to the development of serfdom.

7. The Russians blockaded the Bosphorus in May, 1829; the reference to the Euphrates is directed at the seizure of the Erzerum army in April, 1829.
8. Genesis 3:22.
9. John 1:9.

Letter III

1. Paul 15:54: "Engulfed is death in victory." Verses 53 to 55 read: "For this corruptible body must put on incorruption and this mortal body must put on immortality. But when this mortal body puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the word that is written: Engulfed is death in victory! O death where is thy sting?"
2. *Essays*, Vol. II, Chapter 12; Chaadaev's private library contains a copy of Montaigne's *Essays* in which the words cited above are underlined. For information on this point see Shakhovskoi's notes in *Literaturnoe nasledstvo,* Vol. 22-24 (Moscow, 1935), notes on pp. 63-64.
3. [Why did the ancients not know how to observe? Because they were not Christians.]
4. [*Novum Organum*] Chapter 68.
5. Plato.
6. The theory of time as memory controlled by the will was formulated by Augustine in his *Confessions*, Book 10. But Chaadaev's whole discussion of space and time is definitely post-Kantian. It represents an attempt to break from Kant's insistence that human understanding (Verstand, not Vernunft,) must operate within the limitations of space and time if it is to operate legitimately.
7. [Here two things should be noted: first, that we did not have the idea in mind that heaven is wholly contained in this life, but only that heaven begins already in this life, since death no longer exists since the day on which it was conquered by the Savior: secondly, that here, naturally, there is no question of a material fusion in time and space, but only a fusion in idea and in principle.]
8. [See the ancients.]

Letter IV

1. There is no work by Spinoza called *De Anima.* However, there is a text which is almost the same as the one Chaadaev cites here. It is found in Proposition 32, Part I, of Spinoza's *Ethics* under the chapter heading "De Deo." Part II of Spinoza's *Ethics* is entitled "De Mente." Since Chaadaev read the work in a German translation published in Leipzig in 1796, the mistake is understandable. See Shakhovskoi, *Literaturnoe nasledstvo*, Vol. 22-24 (Moscow, 1935), page 68, note 2.
2. [In this case it would no longer be faith but algebra which would move mountians.]
3. Followers of the Greek philosopher Pythagoras from Samos; they tended to follow a cult which envisioned numerical relationships as the key to the rhythm of the universe.
4. Mystical and religious teachers among the Jews during the Middle Ages; through a study of biblical texts, they sometimes attempted to discover the means to achieve magical effects in nature.

5. [Spinoza]
6. From Spinoza, *Ethics*, Part I, Theorem 17.
7. [The applications of the law discovered by Newton are undoubtedly immense in the order of tangible things, and they will become more numerous day by day. However, it should not be forgotten that the law of the gravitational fall was discovered by Galileo, the law of planetary movement by Kepler. So Newton simply got the fortunate inspiration to link up these laws. Moreover, everything related to this famous discovery is important. For example, one illustrious geometrician complained that we ignored some of the formulae which Newton utilized in his work. The point is well taken; no doubt science would gain infinitely from the rediscovery of these talismans of the genius. But is it possible to believe seriously that the entire secret of Newton's genius, all his powers, are evidenced in his mathematically methods alone? Do we not know that this lofty mind contained something besides the capacity for calculation? I ask you, would a thought of such proportions ever have come to an impious mind? Would a truth of such vast greatness even have been given to the world by a skeptical soul? And when Newton fled from the epidemic raging in London, in order to find refuge in Cambridge where the law of materiality came to illuminate his mind and the veil of nature was torn down before him, how is it possible to imagine that there were only numerals in his godfearing soul? It is a strange thing that there are still people in the world who cannot suppress a smile of pity when they think of Newton writing a commentary on the Apocalypse. They do not perceive that the great discoveries, which the whole human race takes pride in, could have been made only by the real Newton, the genius, just as submissive as he was comprehensive, just as humble as he was powerful, and never the haughty man whom they want him to be. I repeat once more: where, then, has anyone seen an intellectual - I shall not even term him atheistic, but even one just indifferent to religion - extend the frontiers of science as he did beyond the limits which seemed to be prescribed for it?] It is true that "Newton fled," but not from London nor did he proceed to Cambridge; he actually fled from his teaching post at Cambridge itself because of the plague in 1665-1666.
8. Thomas Reid's and Dougald Stewart's philosophy of "common sense." In the post-Napoleonic era this philosophy attracted special attention in France.
9. Job 11:12.
10. Genesis 1:26.

Letter V

1. From *Paradise Regained*, Book IV, line 313. This phrase comes from Christ's answer to Satan's temptations in the desert. Satan has attempted to prove the delights of the artists and philosophers of antiquity, but Christ points out the vanity and deficiencies of the pagan philosophy with the words:

> Alas! what can they teach and not mislead,
> ignorant of themselves, of God much more,
> and how the world began, and how man fell
> degraded by himself, on grace depending?
> Much of the soul they talk, but all awry,
> and in themselves seek virtue; and to themselves
> all glory abrogate, to God give none; . . .

2. This probably refers to the position espoused by the popular scholastic textbook writer of the eighteenth century, Christian Wolff. Wolff distinguished between empirical psychology which employs the inductive method and rational psychology which utilizes the deductive method, i.e., synthesis; Chaadaev objected to this dualist approach.

3. The philosophical term is *petitio principii*, which indicates a particular weakness in a given reasoning process: in order to demonstrate a point, a principle which has not yet been proved is, nonetheless, introduced to form the basis for an entire argumentation which follows from it.

4. One might naturally expect that Chaadaev is referring to Kantian philosophy here. However he is not. The reference is to the Scottish school of Thomas Reid, the metaphysician (1710-1796), as can be seen from the subsequent exposé and the term *empirical philosophy*. Reid opposed the introduction of mathematical formulae into metaphysical or moral formulae. He also aimed at refuting Hume's skeptical epistemological theory. Reid affirmed the impossibility of proving the existence of the external world from reason or from experience; instead he introduced the doctrine of an original instinct or "common sense" as the basis for his reflections on nature.

5. The philosophy of Victor Cousin (1792-1867), who lectured at the Sorbonne form 1815 to 1817 and again from 1828 until his retirement in 1851. He combined the doctrines of Thomas Reid and Dugald Stewart with those of Schelling. In the preface to his *Fragments philosophiques*, Cousin wrote down several ideas which are strikingly close to those of Chaadaev: *"la raison est à la lettre une révelation, une révelation nécessaire et universelle, qui n'a manqué à aucun homme et a eclairé tout homme à sa venue en ce monde; la raison est la médiatrice nécessaire entre Dieu et l'homme, ce logos de Pythagore et de Platon, ce* verbe *fait chair qui sert d'interprète à Dieu et de précepteur à l'homme, homme à la fois et Dieu tout ensemble."*

6. Shakhovskoi states that Schelling himself called his system "transcendental idealism," and that Chaadaev thus called Schelling's philosophy by that name, but that Chaadaev made a mistake here by writing "transcendent" instead of "transcendental." See *Literaturnoe nasledstvo*, Vol. 22-24 (Moscow, 1935), p. 72, note. 6. However, Falk in *Das Weltbild Peter J. Tschaadajews nach seinen acht "Philosohischen Briefen"* claims that it is possible that Chaadaev really meant to use the word "transcendent" instead of "tanscendental" here. Falk's reasoning is the following: It is true that Schelling had termed his system "transcendental" idealism in his book *System des transcendentalen Idealismus* (Tübingen, 1800). But Chaadaev favored the later Schelling who attempted to overcome the pantheistic elements in his philosophy by forming a "positive" philosophy of revelation. In studying Chaadaev's personal letters to Schelling, it appears that Falk's interpretation outweighs that of Shakhovskoi.

7. *Pensées et opuscules* (Paris, 1946), p. 80. The exact quotation reads " . . . *toute la suite des hommes pendant la cours de tant de siècles doit être considérée comme un même homme qui subsiste toujours et qui apprend continuellement . . . . .*" Chaadaev incorrectly cites Pascal as having written: "*toute la suite des hommes est un seul homme qui existe toujours . . . .*" Both Shakhovskoi (*Lit. nasled.*, p. 61 and p. 74), and Falk (*Das Weltbild*, p. 116) have pointed out the difference between Chaadaev's interpretation and Pascal's actual meaning in this case. In Chaadaev's library Shakhovskoi noted Rio's book *Essai sur l'esprit humain dans*

l'antiquité, which begins with the citation above; therefore, it seems likely that Chaadaev was incorrectly quoting not from Pascal directly but from Rio's work.

8. [It is known that the famous proof for the existence of God, ascribed to Descartes, was invented by Anselm, who lived in the eleventh century. The proof remained buried in a corner of the human spirit for almost five hundred years, until Descartes came along and handed it over to philosophy.] Chaadaev's assumption here is not borne out by the history of mediaeval philosophy. Many mediaeval philosophers between Anselm and Descartes utilized this so-called "ontological proof" for God's existence.

9. *De Legibus*, Book I, sections 26 and 27.

10. The rationalism of Descartes and his followers.

11. The philosophy of the empiricists, such as Locke and Condillac.

12. *Méditations métaphysiques*, Part I, "*Méditations touchant la première philosophie*" (Paris, 1932), p. 83. At the very beginning of the third meditation are the words "*Je fermerai maintenant les yeaux, je boucherai mes oreilles, je détournerai tous mes sens, j'effacerai même de ma pensée toutes les images des choses corporelles . . . .* "

13. Professor Bühle had influenced Chaadaev towards Kantianism during his youth. The reference here is clearly to the Königsberg philosopher himself. Chaadaev has a copy of Kant's *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* and the *Kritik der praktischen Vernunft* in his private library. He wrote many comments in the margins of Kant's books; see the reproductions of *Lit. nasled.*, p. 15 and p. 73. Chaadaev crossed out the title of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* and wrote over it *Critique of Adamite Reason.* Chaadaev disagreed with Kant's approach to reason; he felt that Kant has erroneously begun with "Adamite" reason, i.e., human reason after Adam's sin, hence "fallen" reason. According to Chaadaev, Kant should have tried to construct absolute reason, reason before the Fall of Adam, i.e., a truly "pure" reason.

14. The philosophy of Fichte.

15. On the back of the title page of Kant's *Critique of Practical Reason*, Chaadaev wrote eight verses from the gospel of St. John: "He was not the light. . ."; *Lit nasled.*, p. 71. In the Bible these words refer to John the Baptist. It appears that Chaadaev was attempting to indicate that, just as John the Baptist was only the forerunner of the true light, so Kant was merely a forerunner of a superior philosophy of the future.

Letter VI

1. The quotation is correct; it is from Voltaire's *Essai sur les moeurs*, Vol. IV; *Oeuvres Complètes*, Vol. XIX, de l'imprimerie de la société littéraire-typographique (no place of publication given, 1784). Voltaire's text goes on after the paragraph cited by Chaadaev to the following explanation:

> *Il faut que notre patrie de l'Europe ait eu dans ses moeurs et dans son génie un caractère qui ne se trouve ni dans la Trace où les Turcs ont établi le siège de leur empire, ni dans la Tartarie dont ils sortirent autrefois. Trois choses influent sans cesse sur l'esprit des hommes, le climat, le gouvernement et la religion: c'est la seule manière d'expliquer l'énigme de ce monde.* [p. 352].

The entire passage refers to the period of the Renaissance which Voltaire places in late fifteenth and early sixteenth-century Italy. In Volume III of his *Essai sur les moeurs* Voltaire addresses himself to this same point:

> *La nature produit alors des hommes extraordinaires presqu'en tous les genres, surtout en Italie. Ce qui frappe encore dans ce siècle illustre, c'est que malgré les guerres que l'ambition excita, et malgré les querelles de religion qui commençaient à troubler les Etats, ce même génie qui fesait fleurir les beaux arts à Rome, à Naples, à Florence, à Venise, à Ferrare, et qui de là portrait la lumière dans l'Europe, adoucit d'abord les moeurs des hommes dans presque toutes les provinces de l'Europe chrétienne.* [p. 56].

2. [It is not necessary to attempt to determine geographically the point on earth upon which this source of enlightenment existed; but one thing is certain - the traditions of all people on earth converge with the result that incipient human knowledge comes from the same regions of the globe.]

3. The eighteenth-century Rationalist approach to history, in particular, that of Voltaire.

4. Newton's law.

5. Eighteenth-century Rationalism.

6. Aristotle, who was born in 382 B. C. in Stagire, a city on the Thracian peninsula of Chalcidice. Aristotle was often called "the Stagirite."

7. François Fénelon (1651-1715) was the gifted preacher admitted to the Académie française in 1693. His conversion to quietism led to eventual disgrace and ruin; Fénelon's *Dialogues sur l'éloquence*, composed in 1686 but published posthumously in 1718, contained the thesis that the communion of the soul with God rendered the practice of any religious rites needless. Here Chaadaev is probably referring to Fénelon's admiration for Homer's works which served as the basis for Fénelon's most famous book, *Télémaque*, published in Paris 1699.

8. [Schleiermacher, Schelling, Cousin, etc.]

9. [For example, men will no longer look for great Babylon in any specific earthly dominion, as they did in former times; they will sense it living amid the crash of its collapse, i.e., men will realize that the sublime historian of the future who related this horrible fall was not thinking about any particular empire at all but about the collapse of all materialistic societies in the present and future.] Reference to the prophet Daniel; especially 2 Daniel, 7: 1-24.

10. The birth of Christ and the coming of Christianity.

11. The Roman empire.

12. [Alexander, Seleucides, Marcus Aurelius, Julian, Lagides, etc., etc.]

13. In Volume IV of his *Essai sur les moeurs*, Voltair wrote: "L'opinion n'a causé de guerres civiles que chez les chrétiens" (p. 379).

14. [Could it not be the effect of this law, which we see influencing the individual each day, applied to the collective intelligence of people; namely, that any reasoning process having taken, for some reason or other, nothing from the common fund of mankind's worldwide ideas unsubordinated to the influence of any general law, indeed isolated from the human family and withdrawn wholly within itself, necessarily undergoes a degradation in proportion to the amount of its own active insubordination. Really, never was any other nation reduced to such a state of humiliation that it became the booty, not for another people, but for some traders who, even though subjects themselves in their own country, became absolute potentates there among them. Moreover, besides this incredible

degradation of the Indians, the result of conquest, the actual decay of the Indian society, as we know, dates back even further; this literature, this philosophy, and even the language by which it was all disseminated, belong to an order of things which ceased to exist a long time ago.]

15. [When a civilized nation is said to be stationary, it must be clarified when it became that way; otherwise no conclusion can be drawn from this fact.]

16. Matthew 6:33.

17. The eighteenth-century Rationalist School, and probably the works of Voltaire in particular.

18. [Since these lines were written, Mr. Guizot has fulfilled our hopes in great part.] François Guizot lectured as a professor of history at the Sorbonne in 1812. In 1823 he published his *Essais sur l'histoire de France*. Chaadaev was in Paris during the winter of 1823-24. In 1825 Guizot published his *Mémoires relatifs à la Révolution d'Angleterre*; in 1826, *l'Historie de Charles Ier*; in 1828, *Histoire générale de la civilisation en Europe depuis la chute de l'empire romain jusqu'à la Révolution française*; in 1829, Volumes I, II, and III of his *Histoire de la civilsation en France depuis la chute de l'empire romain jusqu'en* 1789. See Charles Quénet, Tchaadaev et les lettres philosophiques (Paris, 1931), pp. 149-155, for an exact analysis of the extent of Guizot's influence upon Chaadaev.

19. Followers of Peter Waldo, a rich merchant from Lyons who in the twelfth century preached the gospel with an anti-sacerdotal interpretation of it. The Waldensians were active missionaries and spread their faith from Spain to Bohemia.

20. This refers to Calvin and his role in the condemnation of Michael Servetus (properly Miguel Servète), the Spanish scholar (1511-1553). Servète published several books on theology in which he held rather unorthodox views. On his way to Naples Servète was apprehended by the magistrates of Geneva on a charge of blasphemy and heresy. Calvin was extremely influential in securing Servète's condemnation to death. Since Servète refused to recant, he was burned at the stake in Geneva in 1553.

21. Huldreich Zwingli (1484-1531), a Catholic priest who denounced the supremacy of the pope, upheld the Bible as the guide to faith and morals, and held that the Eucharist was only a memorial service.

22. Thomas Cranmer (1489-1556) had been Henry VIII's chaplain and his enthusiastic supporter. In 1553 Cranmer became Archbishop of Canterbury. The book of prayers edited under his auspices became a favorite in the Anglican Church.

23. John 17:11.

Letter VII

1. See Letter V for this paraphrase of Pascal's words.

2. [See the second letter.]

3. [One cannot reproach Herodotus, Titus-Livy, or Gregory of Tours for not having had Providence intervene in human affairs; however, must we point out that we are not advocating that the human spirit return to the concept of the superstitious daily intervention of God?]

4. In this Rome, which people talk so much about, which everybody visits but understands so little, there is a unique monument which can be termed an ancient

reality which still endures, an event from another age which has paused in our times: I refer to the Colosseum. In my opinion, there is no factor in history which suggests such profound ideas as the sight of these ruins, which makes the character of two of mankind's ages stand out, and which proves so well this great historical axiom, namely, that there was never any real progress or genuine stability in society before the Christian epoch. This is the arena where the Roman people assembled to steep themselves in blood, where the whole pagan world was epitomized so well in a terrible game, and where the whole life of these times was displayed with its most lively pleasures and most dazzling pomp. Does it not stand there before us in order to tell us what the world had come to when all the forces within human nature had been used up in the construction of the social edifice, when its fall was already evident all over, and when a new era of barbarism was going to start once again? There too for the first time the blood was spilled which was going to moisten the foundations of the new edifice. So, does this monument all by itself not deserve a complete book? It is strange that the Colosseum has never inspired an historical thought full of great truths! Among the swarms of travelers who flocked to Rome there was one who went to a very famous, neighboring height from which he could calmly contemplate the Colosseum in its astounding setting and he thought he saw the centuries roll along before his eyes and teach him the enigma behind their movement, he claimed. Well, this man really only saw the victors and the Capuchins! As if the only things which happened there were triumphs and processions! A petty, trivial idea which gave birth to the deceitful production which everybody knows: a real prostitution of one of the most beautiful, historical spirits which ever existed!] Reference to Edward Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire.*

5. Chaadaev was with the victorious Russian army when it marched into Paris on April 1, 1814. Napoleon had gathered an incredible collection of Greek statues and especially Roman copies of Greek works during his conquests; he had had them brought to Paris. These are the works of art to which Chaadaev is referring here.

6. Chaadaev traveled throughout western Europe from 1823 to 1826.

7. [Note that basically biblical personalities should be those best known to us, for there are no others whose traits are traced better. This is one of the strong points in Scripture. Since people were supposed to be able to identify themselves with these men who were supposed to act directly upon our most intimate feelings, in order to prepare our souls in this way to submit to the otherwise necessary influence of Christ's person, the Scriptures discovered the secret of drawing their traits so well that their images are engraved upon man's mind, so as to create the impression of men whom one has known intimately.]

8. Eighteenth-century Rationalism, especially the works of Voltaire.

9. [If I were not writing to a woman, I would have suggested that the reader read Plato's Symposium to get an idea of what I mean.]

10. [Nevertheless, there is nothing simpler than the enormous glory of Socrates, the only man from the ancient world who died for a conviction. This unique example of heroic faith must have really staggered these people. But is it not silly for us to be as mistaken about Socrates as they were, since it is we who have seen whole populations give us their lives for the cause of truth?]

11. [Pythagoras is no exception. He was a fictitious personage to whom men ascribed whatever they wanted.]

12. [In the beginning the Mohammedans had no antipathy towards Christians; their hatred and disdain for Christianity initially came as the result of long wars with the Christians. It was natural for Christians to consider them first idolaters and then as enemies of their religion, which the Mohammedans eventually became in reality.]
13. [If you want to get an idea of Homer's moral influence in the world, simply read Plutarch's study or the chapter by Maxim or Tyr which deals with Homer. Then read the chapters which deal with Greek civilization in Heeren's book and especially everything relating to this subject in Kreutzer's excellent work.] Arnold Herman Heeren (1760-1842) was a noted German historian of Greek studies. He became professor of history at Göttingen in 1801. His most famous works were *Geschichte des Studiums der Klassischen Literatur seit dem Wiederaufleben der Wissenschaften* (Göttingen, 1792-1802) and *Geschichte des europäischen Staatensystems und seiner Kolonien* (Göttingen, 1809). Georg Frederich Creuzer - Chaadaev's spelling, "Kreutzer," is erroneous in this case - (1771-1858) was a noted German scholar, whose works on Greek religion were influential in his day. In 1804 Creuzer became professor of philology and ancient history at Heidelberg. The period from 1815-1850 was the high point in his scholarly career. His chief works were *Die historische Kunst der Griechen* (Leipzig and Darmstadt, 1848) and especially his *Symbolik und Mythologie der alten Volker, besonders der Griechen* (Leipzig and Darmstadt, lst edition 1810-1812; 2nd edition 1819-1823, and 3rd edition 1836-1843, in four volumes). Chaadaev is probably referring to the first or second edition of this particular work.
14. In Greek mythology Typhon was a giant, the son of Tartarus and Gaea. He had a hundred heads shaped like those of a serpent, and flames darted from his many mouths and eyes. Typhon made war on heaven, but Zeus wounded him, cast Mount Etna upon his head, and finally buried the rest of his body in the earth. The imprisoned giant still belches forth his fire from Mount Etna and groans thunderously.
15. Ahriman was the devil of ancient Zoroastrianism; he was the chief spirit and source of all evil.
16. [The effects of Homeric poetry are naturally connected with those of Greek art, because Homeric poetry is its model; in other words, Homeric poetry formed Greek art and Greek art continued to exercise its effects. It does not matter whether a man such as Homer existed or not, historical criticism will never be capable of annihilating the memory of Homer; so the philosopher should study the idea connected with this memory and not the poet himself.]
17. [We are really fortunate in our day that the new region just uncovered a while ago for historical consideration was not infected by Homerism. The influence of Indian ideas has made itself felt in a useful way for the advance of philosophy. God grant that by this indirect route we may achieve as soon as possible the goal towards which a shorter route has not been able to lead us up to now!]

Letter VIII

1. The critical atitude of the eighteenth-century philosophers vis-à-vis the Middle Ages.
2. The Romantic Idealists of the early nineteenth century. Chaadaev's emphasis on the necessity of creating proper material conditions for intellectual activity is a constant theme in the letters.

3. This refers to the Reformation and post-Reformation period.
4. Roman Catholicism and the Papacy.
5. The Protestant Reformation.
6. Roman Catholicism in western Europe.

1. I Corinthians 13:4-7: "Charity is patient; charity does not envy, is not pretentious, is not puffed up, is not ambitious, is not self-seeking, is not provoked; thinks no evil, does not rejoice over wickedness, but rejoices with the truth; bears all things, believes all things, endures all things."
2. This refers to the publication of "The First Philosophical Letter: and the reaction against it.
3. The religious and political writer Hugues Félicité Robert de Lamennais (1782-1854). His works *Essai sur l'indifférence en matière de religion* and *Défense de l'Essai sur l'indifférence en matière de religion* were both found in Chaadaev's private library; see Shakhovskoi, *Literaturnoe Nasledstvo*, Vol. 22-24, (Moscow, 1935), p. 71. Shakhovskoi also states that in a text of the *Apologia of a Madman* which was in the hands of Chernyshevskii the phrase "a great writer of our time" was footnoted specifically as referring to Lamennais.

The first two parts of Lamennais's *Essai sur l'indifférence en matière de religion* are important to an understanding of Chaadaev's own position. Chaadaev had underlined several words in the book and had made marginal notes, as well. The final note is dated December 1, 1829, and that is the very date at the end of "The First Philosophical Letter." Shakhovskoi holds that the influence of Lamennais upon Chaadaev was much stronger than that of Ballanche, de Bonald, or de Maistre (p. 71).

Lammennais wrote several essays in Chateaubriand's *Conservateur* from 1817 to 1823, but the monarchical tendencies of Villele finally alienated him from that group. During 1830 and 1831 Lamennais published his liberal Catholic journal *L'Avenir* with the dedication *Dieu and Liberté*. In 1831 he was called to Rome by Gregory XVI. In this case the pope was strongly influenced by temporal authorities; he suppressed Lamennais and his movement because of the dangerously "liberal" tendencies within *L'Avenir*. Much to Lamennais's own surprise, he received an extremely cold reception in Rome. In 1832 the encyclical *Mirari Vos* denounced Lamennais's *L'Avenir*. Lamennais replied with his *Les Paroles d'un croyant* which definitely marked his break with Rome. Gregory answered with another encyclical, *Singulari Nos*, in 1834. Lamennais continued to write numerous articles and books. He actively supported the revolution in 1848. Chaadaev wrote the *Apologia of a Madman* in 1837; but by that time he had apparently become disenchanted with Lamennais's tendency to identify God's voice with the popular, democratic movement in France.
4. Chaadaev detected a Russian tendency to have contact with western Europe and to submit to that cultural influence as early as the middle of the sixteenth century.
5. Peter the Great.
6. This is aimed not only at some of those later intellectuals known as Slavophiles but also at the group known as the "Official Nationalists," especially the coterie around Pogodin, Polevoi, Gretch, Weltmann, Burachek, and Shevyrev. In general, Chaadaev is attacking all the nationalistic, isolationist groups in Russia.
7. See the above note.
8. Bayer, Schiller, Miller, and especially Schloezer. Gerhard Friederic Müller (1705-1783), the successor to Gotlieb Bayer, was a prodigious researcher in Russia. He ransacked archives in Siberia, found source materials on the Time of

the Troubles, for example, charters issued by Boris Godunov and Vasili Shuiskii. Muller's book *Sammlung russischer Geschichte* (St. Petersburg, 1732) aroused the curiosity of the famous German historian August-Ludwig von Schloezer (1735-1790). Schloezer came to St. Petersburg in 1761 as a professor and became a member of the Academy of Sciences. There he worked on Russian chronicles. He left Russia in 1776 to become professor of history at the University of Göttingen. His famous *Probe russischer Annalen* (Bremen and Göttingen, 1768) was the first effort at applying a critical method to the study of Russian chronicles.

9. The noted Russian historian Nikolai Karamzin (1776-1826), whom Pushkin called "the Columbus of Russian history," made Russian history popular and appealing to his literary generation with his famous work, *The History of the Russian State* (St. Petersburg, 1816-1826). Chaadaev had known Karamzin personally since his days in St. Petersburg in 1816.

10. Probably the writings of Nikolai Polevoi (1796-1846) and Mikhail Pogodin (1800-1875). Polevoi attempted to write a national history, *A History of the Russian People* in six volumes from 1830 to 1833 (an obvious antithesis to Karamzin's *History of the Russian State*). Although Polevoi had considerable journalistic talent, he possessed none of the literary talents or refinements of a Karamzin. For this reason, Chaadaev considered Polevoi's work to be second-rate. Polevoi's task appears in reality to have been beyond his basic intellectual capabilities. Mikhail Pogodin became a lecturer at Moscow University in 1835 in place of his teacher, M. T. Kachenovski, who had taught Chaadaev. Pogodin edited the *Moscow Messenger* from 1827 to 1830. In general, his popular writings contained a highly nationalistic interpretation of Russian history and later he himself became one of the staunchest supporters of tsarist imperialism.

11. The Time of the Troubles, from 1605 to 1613. The last male heir of the original Riurik dynasty, Fedor Ivanovich, died in 1598. Boris Godunov became tsar upon election by the Zemskii Sobor, but he was faced with years of famine and pestilence on the land, plus a contender for the throne, the so-called False Dmitri. This pretender to the throne claimed that one of the sons of Ivan IV, Dmitri, had not died in 1591 and that he was the true Dmitri, rightful heir to the throne. With the help of Polish soldiers Dmitri seized the throne in 1605 to reign until 1606. The boyar, Vasili Shuisky, then seized the throne and held onto it until 1610. 1611 was the nadir of Russian power; the Poles occupied the Kremlin, the Swedes invaded northern Russia, and several other pretenders to the throne arose throughout Russia. A nationalist movement, inspired by the orthodox monks at Trinity monastery and supported by the lesser gentry and lower classes, led by Pozharski and Minin, threw out the foreign intruders. In 1613 Mikhail Romanov was elected tsar to begin the long Romanov dynasty in Russia. Chaadaev considered the Time of the Troubles to be an extremely important period in Russian history; in his mind, it was one of the rare times in which the "people," the Russian nation, acted as a real force in history.

12. *The Philosophical Letters Addressed to a Lady.*

13. "The First Philosophical Letter."

14. "The First Philosophical Letter."

15. Nikolai Gogol's play *Revizor* (*The Inspector General*). In 1824, scenes 7, 8, 9, and 10 were presented in St. Petersburg; on June 16/28, 1830, parts of it were played again, then the third act was performed in Moscow. Finally most of the play with a few lines cut out was performed in Moscow. Here Chaadaev might be

referring specifically to the performance in Moscow on December 2/14, 1835, which he could have attended. The "almost tragic emotion" resulted from Gogol's satire of the corruption and bribery which existed in Russian provincial life.

COMMENTARIES AND NOTES TO FRAGMENTS, ARTICLES, AND OTHER LETTERS

Most of the following translations are based on manuscripts from the Pypin Archives (no. 250) or from the Shakhovskoi Archives (no. 334), both of which are housed in the Manuscript Division of the Institute of Russian Literature (Pushkin House), Academy of Sciences, Leningrad. Other manuscripts come from the Manuscript Division of the Lenin Library, Moscow, the Section of the Central Archives of the Government at Leningrad; the Military and Historical Archives, and the Historical Museum of Moscow; the originals of the letters to Ivan Gagarin are at the Bibliothèque Slave, Centre des Etudes Russes at Meudon, France. The latest scholarly edition of these is by Raymond T. McNally, Francois Rouleau, and Richard Tempest entitled *Pierre Tchaadaev, Oeuvres inédites ou rares*. Centre d'Etudes Russes, France, 1990.

Abbreviations

V. E. = Vestnik Evropy

R. A. = Russkii Archiv

Gershenzon edition = M. O. Gershenzon, *Sochinenii i Pis'ma Chaadaeva*, 2 Vols. Moscow, 1913-1914.

Gagarin edition = I. S. Gagarin, ed. *Oeuvres choisies de Pierre Tchaadaev*, Paris-Leipzig, 1962.

MRT edition = Raymond McNally, François Rouleau, and Richard Tempest, eds. *Oeuvres inédites ou rares de Pierre Tchaadaev*, Centre des Etudes Russes, Meudon, France, 1990.

Rouleau edition = François Rouleau, ed., *Pierre Tchaadaev Lettres philosophiques*, Paris, 1970.

Tarasov edition = Boris Tarasov, ed., *P. Ia. Chaadaev, Statii i Pis'ma*, Moscow, 1987.

Fragments and Diverse Thoughts [1828-1856]

1. Copy by Michael Zhikharev, Pypin Archive 250-549 (old no. 3491) and 250-293 (old nos. 3489-3491) published by Tsuguo Togawa in *Slavic Studies* XXXIX, University of Toronto 1978, republished in Slavic Studies no. 23, University of Hokkaido, 1979, 1-52. A Russian translation was published in *Voprosy filosofii,* no. I, 1986; six of the Fragments were published in Russian translation at the end of an article by Chaadaev in "Something from the Correspondence of XXX" *Telescope*, no. 11 [1832], reproduced in the Gershenzon edition, vol. II, 24-25, MRT edition 23-65.

In his first volume Gershenzon published a portion of the "Fragments and Diverse Thoughts" including fragments from the *Telescope* under the title "Otryvki" in yet another Russian translation from a copy by A. P. Elagina (Gershenzon edition I, 143-160). At the end of his publication of Chaadaev's article for *L'Univers*, Shakhovskoy placed his translation of three fragments (*Zveni'ia*, vol. III, M-L 1935, 387-389).

Recently Shakhovskoy's translation was only partially published in *Voprosy filosofii*, I, January 1986, 125-140 along with his translation of Chaadaev's "Aphorisms and Remarks" (121-124). In his book *Stat'i i pis'ma Chaadaeva* (Moscow, 1987) Tarasov only republished the Elagin translation from the Gershenzon edition and Shakhovskoy's translation which had already appeared in *Voprosy filosofii* (Jan. 1986) including "Aphorisms and Remarks" under the title "Otryvki i Aforizmi." The Zhikharev translation which includes the entire "Fragments and Diverse Thoughts" was published in the journal *Simvol*, no. 15, 1986, 215-273. The "Fragments" represent a kind of intellectual diary which Chaadaev kept from his return from his European trip up to his death. It can be compared in importance, as Zhikharev states with the works of "La Rochefoucault, Pascal, and the first Napoleon" (Zhikharev "Chaadaev" *V. E.* II, 38).

The Zhikharev copy is divided into thirteen sections which are not in chronological order. Sections 1 and 2 deal with a critique of the philosophies of Schelling and Fichte. Section 9 contains a fragment in which Chaadaev refers to his meeting with the Methodist missionary Charles Cook "five years ago," i.e., in January of the year 1825 when Chaadaev met Cook in Florence (See the Gershenzon edition, I, 69-70). All of section no. 12 is a translation of paragraphs in section 9, aside from the final paragraph, so we include only that final paragraph here. Section 13 consists of two aphorisms in Russian; the first about the iminent war with France and England over the Eastern Question. Sections 4 and 5 from a unity of thought with ideas analogms to those in the First Philosophical Letter, the Apologia of a Madman, the letter to Count Circout dated 1846 (Gershenzon edition I, 268-275) and Chaadaev's article for *L'Univers*. Section 6 contains a French translation of a critique of the Polish Hegelian Cieczkowski *Prolegomena to Historiosophy*, written by the German left Hegelian K. L. Michelet. We have not translated that passage here. In section 7 Chaadaev refers to the Crimean War; this section and also section 8

contain passages which recall that of "A letter from an unknown (male) to an unknown (female)" written in 1854. Sections 10 and 11 from a whole with an analysis of the philosophical systems of Fichte and Hegel, as well as two fragments about the Crimean War. Section 3 contains a fragment repeated in a paragraph in Chaadaev's article for *L'Univers* (See *Cahiers du monde russe et soviétique*, XV, 3-4, 413). The fragments from the Pypin Archive 250-549 were written in 1853; the one before the penulimate one is at the end of section 12; the penullimate one and the last one form section 13.

In preparing the Fragments for publication Shakhovskoi tried to number them and put them in chronological order and that is the way they were recently published in *Voprosy filosofii*. But, though one can date some passages with great accuracy, dating of all of them accurately is impossible. Such an attempt also confuses the way in which Zhikharev preserves the Fragments. (For a recent provocative study of Chaadaev's general thought see Andrzej Walicki, *The Slavophile Controversy*, Oxford University Press, 1975, 83-117 and by the same author, *A History of Russian Thought*, Stanford University Press 1979, 81-91.)

2. Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph von Schelling (1775-1854), German philosopher, idealist and "father of existentialism." Chaadaev regarded Schelling as the greatest philosopher of his day and Schelling expressed admiration for Chaadaev as "one of the most remarkable men not only in Russia but in Europe." They had met in 1825 in Karlsbad. Chaadaev wrote to Schelling in 1833 and again in 1842. In his Fifth Philosophical Letter Chaadaev referred to Schellingism as "a kind of subtle platonism."

Schelling's first period known as subjective idealism (1795-1796) is when he slowly freed himself from the notions of Fichte. The second period (1797-1803) was the one of *Naturphilosophie* when he worked out his most well-known and influential views. The third period (1803-1809) the so-called philosophy of "triumph" when *Naturphilosophie* and epistomology were joined together. The fourth and final period (1809-1854) was that of "positive philosophy" an attempt to join historical mythology and religion, a kind of historical philosophy of revelation. Chaadaev initial discussions with Schelling at Karlsbad were about Schelling's then new "positive philosophy."

3. Benedict Spinoza (1632-1679) Dutch philosopher of Sephardic Portugese Jewish origins who saw God as iminent in the universe. He was accused of being a pantheist and excommunicated from the Jewish community. He rejected personal immortality and any transcendental difference between good and evil.

4. Chaadaev characterized pantheism in his Fifth Philosophical Letter as a "deadly doctrine."

5. Johann Gotlieb Fichte (1762-1814) German idealist philosopher. In his Fifth Philosophical Letter Chaadaev called Fichte's system "the philosophy of the omnipotence of the human ego," a precursor of Schelling's idealism.

6. Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi (1743-1819), German philospher of "feeling and faith" who attacked the Kantian tradition and Spinoza's rationalism, and the

system of Fichte, Schelling and Hegel for their tendencies towards pantheism and "nihilism."
7. Jacobi - See previous note no. 6 above.
8. Peter Abelard (1079-1142) medieval philosopher and poet, lover of Heloise, attacked nominalism in favor of conceptualism.
9. Alcuin (735-804) born in York, England, theologian and man of letters who was an important teacher during the "Carolingian Renaissance" under Charlemagne.
10. Cicero (106-44 B. C.) Roman orator and politician. Chaadaev often cited his words.
11. A Russian translation of this paragraph appeared in *Zven'ia*, III-IV, 388.
12. M. V., perhaps a reference to the infamous homosexual Philip Vigel, a particular enemy of Chaadaev's and a chauvinist. Vigel was the administrator of the Department of Foreign Religions.
13. Compare with the words in the Gershenzon edition, I, 200 and I, 230.
14. See the Gershenzon edition, I, pp. 197 and 220.
15. Peter the Great. See the Gershenzon edition I, 87.
16. Catherine II (1762-1796)
17. Alexander I (1800-1825)
18. See the similar word in the article for *L'Univers* from "For example" to "worried look of the former."
19. Ibid; where the words are "unfortunate part of the nation."
20. Ibid; where the words are "if one wishes to account for its most deplorable effects."
21. Ibid.
22. Ibid.
23. Ibid.
24. Ibid. See similar words in the article for *L'Univers*. See also Chaadaev's remarks about serfdom in his Second Philosophical Letter (Gershenzon edition, I, 74-79).
25. Epistle to the Romans, 13.1. One of Chaadaev's main ideas was the lack of any tradition of rule by law in Russia.
26. See the Letter to Circourt, Gershenzon edition, I, 272-273.
27. See Chaadaev's article for *L'Univers* for similar words.
28. The Time of Troubles 1605-1613 in Russia, Civil war, famine and foreign intervention by the Poles and the Swedes, dynastic crisis with five claimants to tsardom including the False Dmitri (1605-1606).
29. See *Apologia of a Madman* (Rouleau edition, 205) and Chaadaev's article for L'Univers.
30. See "The First Philosophical Letter" (Gershenzon edition, 80-81 and Rouleau edition 52).
31. Zhikharev records that in discussions with the Slavophiles Chaadaev held that Peter the Great did not "steal away" the Russian nationality. No individual is powerful enough to be able to overturn the character of the Russian people

especially within one generation. See V.E. *The Messenger of Europe*, IX, 1871, 26, and the Gershenzon edition I, 247-248 and 270.
32. Chaadaev's idea was that "it is in expanding abroad...that Christianity was developed in the West.
33. Protestantism. In the *Sixth Philosophical Letter* Chaadaev condemned the Reformation as "this deadly event" which had ruptured European unity (Rouleau edition, 141).
34. See *Apology of a Madman* (Rouleau edition, 204).
35. Patriarch Nikon who was dismissed and exiled by Tsar Alexis after the Council of 1666-67.
36. See "The First Philosophical Letter" (Rouleau edition, 52).
37. Victor Cousin (1792-1867) French founder of the spiritual or eclectic school, See Rouleau ed. 138, Gershenzon ed. I, 168 and 187 and McNally "The Books in Chaadaev's Libraries." *Chaadayev and His Friends* 192 and 501.
38. Theodore Simon Jouffroy (1796-1842) French philosopher of common sense and spiritualism. See McNally, *Chaadayev and His Friends* 182.
39. Count August Cieszkowski (1814-1894) Polish Hegelian philosopher. See Walicki, *The Slavophile Controversy*, 97. "Michelet of Berlin" is Karl-Ludwig Michelet (1803-93), professor at Berlin University and representative of the Left Hegelians.
40. The following paragraph was published in a Russian translation by Shakhovskoi in *Zven'ia* III-IV, 387-388.
41. Compare with "The First Philosophical Letter", Rouleau edition 5, and "Apologia of a Madman", Rouleau edition 203.
42. See "The First Philosophical Letter", Rouleau edition 52.
43. See "Apologia of a Madman", Rouleau ed. 211.
44. See "Apologia of a Madman", Rouleau ed. 204.
45. Georg Wilhelm Hegel (1770-1831) famous German philosopher of absolute idealism and the dialectical system of thought. See Gershenzon I, 245.
46. A play on words: in Russian "the third act" and "the third section," i.e., the secret police are written the same way.
47. Perhaps Innokentii (1800-1857) theologian and preacher named archbishop of Kherson and Taurus in 1848.
48. Compare with "Extract from a Letter of an Unknown (male) to an Unknown (female)" [1854], Gershenzon ed. I, 309.
49. See Gershenzon ed, I, 308.
50. See Gershenzon ed, I, 191.
51. In his "First Philosophical Letter" Chaadaev called England "this privileged land" whose history was only a religious one. See Rouleau ed., 61.
52. For Alfred the Great (849-899) king of the West Saxons in 871.
53. The passage from "inspiration" to "zoology" was published in a Russian translation in the Gershenzon ed. I, 143-160.
54. Here Chaadaev recalls his happy days spent in England during the year 1823.

55. See, for example, Chaadaev's ideas about Moses in "The Seventh Philosophical Letter" Rouleau ed. 165-168.
56. John VI.46. The Gospel of St. John, especially the section known as the Apocalypse concerning the end of the world. (See Rouleau edition 187.)
57. See Chaadaev's "Eighth Philosophical Letter."
58. Epicurus (341-270) B. D.) Athenian philospher who considered pleasure as the greatest good, i.e., the practice of virtue. In his "Seventh Philosophical Letter" Chaadaev evaluates Epicureanism positively. (See Rouleau edition 170-171.)
59. Zeno of Citium (333-262 B. C.) founder of the Stoic school. Chaadaev in his "Seventh Philosophical Letter" judged stoicism as "arrogant, hard and impractical." (See Rouleau edition 170.)
60. Matthew VI.33. The theme "the kingdom of God on earth" is at the core of Chaadaev's thought. (See Rouleau edition 45-46, 58, 62, 89, 148, 186, 199, 232.)
61. St. Luke II, 40 and 46.
62. Bathold Georg Niebuhr (1776-1831) German historian, author of *The History of Rome* published during 1827-1828 in which he treated the sources scientifically and analyzed the legends critically.
63. François Guizot (1787-1874) French Romantic historian and conservative politician. Almost all of Guizot's works were in Chaadaev's library. In his "Sixth Philosophical Letter" Chaadaev praised Guizot's contributions to the philosophy of history. (See Rouleau edition, 150.)
64. Nicholas Mihailovich Karamzin (1766-1826) Russian historian and man of letters representing the so-called sentimental school. Chaadaev first met the poet Pushkin in Karamzin's home.
65. "Many are the poets who have never penn'd
Their inspiration, and perchance the best:
They felt, and loved, and died, and would not lend
Their thoughts to meaner beings..."
From *The Prophecy of Dante Canto IV.*
66. Emanuel Swedenborg (1688-1772) Swedish mystic who considered that he had made contact with spirits and angels. In his works he described the cities, marriages, and customs of angels. See Quénet, 52; and Raymond McNally "The Books in Petr Ja. Caadaev's Libraries" *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas*, vol. 14, no. 5, 505.
67. Compare with similar words in "The Third Philosophical Letter" Rouleau edition, 94-95.
68. See "The Third Philosophical Letter" Rouleau edition, 91.
69. Charles Bonnet (1720-1793) Swiss naturalist and religious cosmologist who thought that all possible beings had been created at the same time; they all existed in germinal form and came to life upon the death of other organisms. See Quénet, 172-174 and McNally *Chaadayev and His Friends*, 189.

70. William Paley (1743-1805) English theologian and moral philosopher who considered that activity is right if it has a useful goal. He was a forerunner of Utilitarianism. (See Quenet 172, 174, 188-189 and McNally *Ibid* 189.
71. Charles Cook, an English Methodist whom Chaadaev met in January,1825. See Gershenzon edition I, 69-70.
72. Georges-Louis Leclerc, Count of Buffon (1707-1788) French naturalist, author of *Natural History* in 44 volumes. See Quénet, 174, no. 1 and 212 and McNally *Ibid* 166.
73. St. John 17.3.
74. From "Do you believe" to "nothing but that" on the same page was published in Russian translation in the Gershenzon edition, II, 24-25.
75. St. Paul's Epistle to the Corintians I, 13, 7. Chaadaev put these same words at the outset of his "Apologia of a Madman." (Rouleau edition, 199.)
76. From the words "immortality" to that of "sun" was published in Russian translation in the Gershenzon edition II, 24-25, where the fragments are put in another order.
77. Diogenes the Cynic (413-323 B. C.) in speaking to Alexander the Great who asked him if he wanted anything, the learned cynic supposedly replied "Yes, would you stop blocking my sun."
78. René Descartes (1596-1650) famous French philosopher and mathematician, author of the famous phrase "I think, therefore I am." (Cogito ergo sum). See Rouleau edition, 103, 123, 125; the notes of Shakhovskoi in *Literary Heritage* (Literaturnoe Nasledstvo) XXII-XXIV, 1935, 68, 70; Quénet 163-165 and McNally, 74.
79. See footnote 45. Fichte had published his *Wissenschaftslehre* or Doctrine of Science in 1794.
80. The Sorcerer's Apprentice of Goethe: the famous ballad by the German poet Goethe (1797).
81. In the year 1204 Constantinople was seized and ravaged by western crusaders and in 1453 that same city fell to the Turks.
82. A reference probably to Chateaubrand's *Génie du Christianisme*.
83. In the spirit of the article by the Russian poet Fedor Tiutchev entitled "Russia and the Revolution" (1848).
84. Gaspard de Coligny (1519-1572) French admiral, leader of the Huguenots.
85. Charles IX (1519-1572) ruled France during the St. Bartholemew massacre in 1572.
86. Albrecht von Wallenstein (1583-1634) Friedlandian hero, commander of the imperial forces during the Thirty Years War, was beaten at Lutzen in 1632 and Gustav Adolphe Johann Tilly (1559-1632) commander of the army of The Catholic League defeated by Gustavus Adolphus near Leipzig where he died.
87. François Michel Louvois (1639-1691) French Minister of War under Louis XIV, largely responsible for the devastation of the Palatine and persecution of the Huguenots.
88. In 1689 Peter the Great hanged 200 of the treacherous strel'tsy (palace guards) from wood scaffolding around the Kremlin walls.

89. Raias or rayas: Turkish word for their non-Moslem subjects.
90. A reference to the Crimean War (1854-1856).

Letter to Alexander Pushkin, September 18 (1831)

1. Published first in *Russkii Arkhiv* 1881, Vol. I, 431-435, republished in the Gershenzon edition (I, 162-166).
2. Chaadaev gave a version of "The Philosophical Letters," probably Letter VI which Alexander Pushkin, Russia's greatest poet, took with him to Moscow in May 1831 to convince French publisher Bellizard to publish it. Evidently, Pushkin wrote on July 6, 1831 to Chaadaev, the poet saw neither Bludov nor Bellizard because of the cholera quarantine and asked whether Chaadaev wanted the manuscript back. In August Pushkin tried unsuccessfully to send the manuscript back to Chaadaev by mail.
3. The July revolution of 1830 in France when Louis Philippe replaced Charles X as king.
4. The poet Vasilii Zhukovskii.
5. King Charles X of France who tried unsuccessfully to roll back the wheel of history and restore royal absolutism.
6. The movement led by Lamennais.
7. Count [M. Lamarck] one of the radical leaders of the opposition in 1830-31.
8. Pushkin's poem "To the Slanderers of Russia." The other poem which Chaadaev refers to is "The Anniversary of Borodino." Both poems were published with Zhukhovskii's "Old Song" at the end of August and beginning of September in 1831 in a separate brochure under the title *Upon the Seizure of Warsaw. Three Poems of V. Zhukhovskii and A. Pushkin.*

Letter to Schelling, 1832

1. First published by M. M. Longinov in *Russkii Vestnik*, November 1862, 157 ff. republished in the Gershenzon edition (I, 167-170). The letter was sent to Schelling, the famous German philosopher via A. I. Turgenev, who was then abroad. Chaadaev usually worked for a long time on his letters. In this case though the letter is dated 1832, he actually sent the letter only in April, 1833.
2. Chaadaev did meet Schelling at Karlsbad in 1825 and evidently made a very positive impression on that German philosopher.
3. Victor Cousin (1792-1867) French writer and philosopher of the "spiritualist" school based on the ideas of the Scottish philosopher Thomas Reid (1710-1796) whose "common sense" philosophy accepted the external world as existing by intuition.

Letter to A. I. Turgenev, April 20 (1833)

1. Turgenev archive 2680, first published in the Gershenzon edition (I, 170-173). Alexander Ivanovich Turgenev, born in 1784 into the family of Ivan Petrovich Turgenev. Studied at Moscow University boarding school and in 1800 went to work for the archives of Foreign Affairs in Moscow, attended Göttingen University for two years; he held various government jobs. Alexander was a friend of Pushkin, Viazemskii, and Chaadaev. He spent the years from 1825 to 1845 mostly in Europe with some short return trips to his homeland. He knew Goethe, Humboldt, Walter Scott, Lamartine,

Chateaubriand, Hugo, and Schelling. Chaadaev enjoyed writing to Alexander Turgenev about philosophical topics.
2. Turgenev's cousin - A. I. Nefedeva (1782-1857).
3. Madame Bravoura - Italian-born beauty living in Moscow, a friend of A. I. Turgenev, Chaadayev, Viazemskii.
4. Pashkovy - General A. V. Pashkov and his wife E. P., born Kindiakova. Both General A. V. Pashkov and General P. V. Kindiakov were friends whom both Chaadaev and Turgenev often visited.
5. Turgenev showed this letter to the French philosopher Ballanche.

Letter to A. I. Turgenev, May 1 (1835)
1. Turgenev archive 2684, first published in the Gargarin edition *Oeuvres Choisies* (Paris1862), 170-174, republished in the Gershenzon edition (I, 179-182).
2. "The writing about which you speak" - probably an early version of some of Chaadaev's "Philosophical Letters" which he was in the midst of revising and which A. I. Turgenev undertook to insert in one of the French reviews.
3. Countess Rozaliia Aleksandrovna Rzhevskaia (1791-1865) a very beautiful, cultured, and zealous Catholic, from1831 onwards a widow.
4. Madame Ekaterina Nikolaevna Orlov, wife of Michael Orlov and daughter of N. N. Raevskaia.
5. Concerning Bravoura, see Letter of April 20, (1833) to A. I. Turgenev.
6. Avdotiia Petrovna Elagina - mother of the Kireevskii brothers; in her noted salon Chaadaev was a constant guest.
7. Sophia Sergeevna Meshcherskaia (1775-1848), poetess known for her projects to disseminate the Bible among the common Russian people.
8. Three Tales by N. Ph. Pavlov came out at the end of 1834 or at the beginning of 1835.
9. Kukolnik - author of the play *Prince Skopin Shuiskii*, a drama in five acts.
10. The article and the Zhukovskii letter appeared in the "Bibliotheka dlia chteniia" (Vol. 8, Mar.-Apr. 1835), the article entitled "German Philosophy" was not signed.
11.Philarète Chasles (1799-1873) - French writer.
12. Abbot Lacordaire (1801-1870) well-known Paris church preacher in the 30's.
13. Sophia Petrovna Svechin (1782-1857) - a noted Russian Catholic, then living in Paris, one of the pillars of French ultramontanism; A. I. Turgenev was a close friend of hers.
14. On Meshcherskaia, *supra*.

Letter to A. I. Turgenev (1835)
1. Turgenev archive 2684, first published in the Gagarin edition, 174-187, republished in the Gershenzon edition (I, 183-190).
2. Chaadaev speaks about the second volume of "Der Salon" by Heinrich Heine, published in January, 1835. Chaadaev must have known this book already in its

original form: the main part was published in *Revue des Deux Mondes* 1834 in the form of three articles, I. The Religious Revolution and Martin Luther, II. Les Precursers of the Philosophical Revolution, Spinoza and Precursors Lessing, III. The Philosophical Revolution, Kant, Fichte,Schelling. See Heinrich Heine's *Sämtliche Werke* herausg. von Prof. Ernst Elster. Leipzig and Wien. Bibliograph.Institut Band IV, Einleitung. 145.

3. The play of Zagoskin "The Dissatisfied" was first presented in Moscow on December 2, 1835.

4. Michael Orlov (1788-1842) friend of Chaadaev and of Pushkin, leader in the Union of Welfare and the Decembrist uprising.

5. Uvarov, Count Sergei Semonovich, Minister of National Education.

6. Saint Marc Girardin (1801-1873) French writer, later political activist, professor of literature at the Sorbonne.

7. Antoine César Becquerel (1788-1878) French physicist, noted for his own excellent works on electrical theory and magnetics; his new book, about which Chaadaev writes was - *Traité de l'électricité et du magnétisme,* the first volume came out in 1834, and the 7th, the last - in 1840.

8. Kupfer - Adolph Yakolevich Kupfer (1799-1865) physicist, since 1828 a member of the Russian Academy of Science, Chaadaev probably has in mind Kupfer's work *The Manuel for Magnetic Activity and Meteorlogical Observations*, Saint Petersburg, 1835.

9. Simonov, Ivan Mikhailovich (1794-1855) professor of astronomy at Kazan, who worked on the study of magnetic declinations. In 1823-24 Simonov and Kupfer lived in Paris, where they were ordered to buy physics instruments; Chaadaev might have met them there.

10. Spurzheim, Johann-Kaspar (1776-1832) noted phrenologist.

11. Jouffroi, Théodor Simon (1796-1842) a student of Cousin, member of the "spiritualist" school of the Scottish philosopher Reid, professor of philosophy in the Collège de France.

12. Pallas, Peter Simon (1741-1811) well-known traveller and naturalist.

13. Fischer, Johann-Eberhard (1697-1771) former Rector of the Academic High School in Petersburg in 1739, he was ordered to go to Siberia to do research.

14. Young Gagarin - Prince Ivan Sergeevich Gagarin (1814-1882) then 21 years of age. From 1833 to1835 he had served at the Russian mission in Munich, where Schelling lived. Later in his own preface to *Oeuvres choisies de Pierre Tchadaaief* Gagarin wrote: "In 1833 at Munich, the celebrated Schelling spoke to me of him (Chaadaev), as of one of the most remarkable men whom he had met. When I was in Moscow in 1835, I hurried to put myself in contact with him..."

15. Pierre-Simon Ballanche (1776-1847) French poet and thinker, along with DeMaistre, Bonald, and others one of creators of a Catholic traditionalist philosophy of history. He wrote *An Essay Concerning Social Palingenesis* in 1828.

16. Genoude, Antoine-Eugène (1792-1849) abott French publicist and legitimist, editor of *Gazette de France* in 1834-35 he published *La Raison de Christianisme* in 12 volumes.
17. About Madame Svechin see Letter of May 1, 1835 to A. I. Turgenev.
18. About Madame Meshcherskaia see Letter of May 1, 1835 to A. I. Turgenev.
19. Bulgakov, Alexander Iakovlevich (1781-1863) then Muscovite Post-director, friend of Chaadaev and Turgenev, through whom they usually passed their own letters.
20. d'Eckstein Baron Ferdinand (1790-1861) French publicist, philosopher, orientalist, and an adherent of extreme ultramontanism. Among Chaadaev's papers is an extract of a letter from Baron d'Eckstein who sent it along with his brochure *Analysis of the Kachaka-Upanischat* dated "22 December ,1835."

Letter to Ivan Iakushkin, May 2 (1836)

1. From the Dashkov collection 93-3-1361 manuscript section Institute of Russian Literature (Pushkin House), Leningrad, published by Dmitrii Shakhovskoi in *Dekabristy i ikh Vrem'ia* (The Decembrists and their Time) Vol. II, Moscow, 1932, 183-185; MRT edition, 69-70. Gershenzon wrongly dated this letter October 19, 1837. The letter evidently never reached Iakushkin who was living in exile in Siberia. Iakushkin was ordered transferred from Petrovsky to Ialutorovsk on April 16, 1836. His mother-in-law Nadezhda Sheremeteva took care of his correspondence. It appears that she did not forward Chaadaev's letter to Iakushkin, probably because she didn't know exactly where he was. Ivan Dmitrievich Iakushkin (1793-1857) founding member of the Union of Salvation, leader of the Decembrist uprising, university friend of Chaadaev, had been exiled to Siberia in 1825.
2. The first volume of Antoine Cesar Becquerel's *Traité de l'electricité et du Magnétisme* published in 1834.
3. Catherine Gavrilovna Levashev, born Rechetova, died in 1839, Chaadaev's cousin. Towards the end of 1833 Chaadaev moved into a wing of the Levashev mansion on Novaia Basmannaia St. in Moscow and resided there all his life. She and Chaadaev were good friends. They wrote letters to one another even though they lived in the same house.
4. Antoine César Becquerel (1788-1878) French physicist and Georges Leopold Chretien Frederic Dagobert, Baron of Cuvier (1796-1832) a comparative zoologist and paleontologist who believed in the liberal interpretation of Genesis. On the relations between Chaadaev and Cuvier see *V. E.* V, 1871, 12. See also Quénet, 212-213.
5. Cuvier (1769-1832) zoologist and paleontologist who adhered to a literal interpretation of Genesis.
6. Chaadaev referred to the Decembrist Uprising of 1825 as "an immense calamity which set us back half a century" in his "First Philosophical Letter" (Rouleau edition, 56).

Letter to A. I. Turgenev, May 25 (1836)

1. Turgenev archive, first published in the Gershenzon edition (I, 191).
2. Chaadaev had received a letter and a brochure from Eckstein at the outset of 1836. He in turn wrote to Eckstein. Gershenzon stated that the original letter was lost. (Gershenzon edition, I, 390). However, a version of the Chaadaev letter to Eckstein, evidently rewritten after May 25, 1836 was recently discovered and published in the Soviet journal *Narody Azii i Afriki* (Peoples of Asia and Africa) under the title "A Letter of P. Ia. Chaadaev about Indian Philosophy," no. 5, Moscow, 1986, 106-107. Eckstein replied with a letter to Chaadaev dated October 12, 1837. Concerning Eckstein see Letter of 1835 to A. I. Turgenev.
3. Concerning Lacordaire see Letter of May 1, 1835 to A. I. Turgenev.
4. Pushkin was in Moscow from May 2 to May 20 or 21, 1836.
5. Alexis, Count de Tocqueville (1805-1859), noted French writer and commentator about America. His classic work *De la démocratie en Amérique* was published in 1835.
6. Concerning Meshcherskaia see Letter of May 1, 1835 to A. I. Turgenev.

Letter to Princess Sophia Meshcherskaia, October 15 (1836)

1. Pypin archive 250-524 (old no. 3451); MRT edition, 71-72. Concerning Sophia Sergeevna Meshcherskaia see Letter of May 1, 1835 to A. I. Turgenev.
2. Upon publication of his "First Philosophical Letter" in Russian translation Chaadaev sent a copy to Princess Meshcherskaia.

Letter to Myself in the manner of Michael Orlov (1836)

1. Shakhovskoi Archive 334-418. Another copy is in the Dashkov Collection 93-3-135 8. Textual differences are minimal; published in MTR, 72. Michael Fedorovich Orlov (1788-1842) veteran of the Napoleonic Wars, friend of Pushkin, active member of the Union of Public Welfare. After the Decembrist uprising tsar Nicholas I declared, "Orlov should be hanged first." But Orlov escaped that judgment due to the influence of his brother Count Alexis Orlov.
2. Chaadaev's "First Philosophical Letter" appeared in Russian translation towards the end of September 1836 in the journal *Telescope*. On October 24 Alexander Turgenev wrote to Peter Viazemskii that Chaadaev was in the midst of writing against himself in accordance with the ideas of Orlov *(Ostaf'efski Arkhiv kniiazei Viazemskikh*, Vol. III, St. Petersburg, 1899, 336). This letter remained unfinished.

Letter to Ivan Iakushkin, October 19 (1837)

1. Pypin Archive 250-545; MRT edition, 74-75. Concerning Iakushkin see Letter to Ivan Iakushkin May 2 (1836). This letter evidently never reached Iaskushkin.
2. Chaadaev's letter of May 2, 1836 which also never reached Iakushkin.
3. Nadezhda Sheremeteva.
4. The publication of Chaadaev's "First Philosophical Letter."
5. Concerning Becquerel see Letter of May 2, 1836 to Iakushkin.

6. Concerning Cuvier see Letter of May 2, 1836 to Iakushkin.

Letter to Michael Orlov, 1837

1. Pypin archive 250-535, another copy in the Manuscript Section, Lenin Library, Moscow, no. 1032; published in MRT, 74-75. Concerning Orlov see Letter to Myself, October (1836).
2. Chaadaev noted that one of the most remarkable characteristics of Christianity was "the elevation of hope to the rank of virtue and its placement on a par with faith and love" (See *The Journal of Herzen* dated March 5, 1844 in *Polnoe Sobranie* (Complete Works) II, 339).
3. See above in *The Fragments*, "Christian immortality is life with the least death; not at all a life after death, as people imagine." In his letter of November 15, 1846 to Samarin Chaadaev wrote "Fortunately life does not end on the day of death; it begins again the day after." (Gershenzon edition I, 277).

Letter to A. I. Turgenev, 1837

1. Turgenev archive 2684, published in the Gershenzon edition, I, (213-217). This letter was apparently not mailed to Turgenev.
2. Ekaterina Alexandrovna here K[aterina] A[leksandrovna] Sverbeeva (1808-1892), born princess Shcherbatova, intimate friend of Chaadaev. Her literary salon in Moscow was one of the main intellectual centers. Alexander Turgenev called her "Recamier-Sverbeeva" (*O. A.* IV, 195, 206) thereby comparing her to the famous Parisian literary salon of Madame Recamier.
3. *L'Affaire de Rome* by Félicité Robert de Lamennais (Paris, 1836). Lamennais (1782-1854) was a famous French Catholic apologist. His best-seller *Essai sur l'indifférence en matière de religion* had a strong influence on Chaadaev. But during the 1830's when Lamennais drifted into liberalism, Chaadaev became disenchanted with his views. Lamennais edited the liberal Catholic journal *L'Avenir* from October 16, 1830 to November 15, 1831. He went to Rome to plead his case but the Pope condemned some of his views in *Mirari Vos* a papal encyclical of August 15, 1832. Lamennais published his "radical" *Paroles d'un Croyant* in 1834 in which he pleaded for democracy. The papal encyclical *Singulari Nos* condemned the *Paroles*. Lamennais drifted out of the official church. Liberal Catholicism was crushed.
4. To whom it may concern.
5. What does the people have to do with reason?
6. the golden mean
7. An article by Peter Viazemskii in French about a fire in the Winter Palace, first published in *Gazette de France* at the end of 1837 or beginning of 1838 and then printed in a separate brochure anonymously "*Incendie du Palais d'Hiver à Saint-Petersboug.*" (Paris, 1838).
8. [I mean prose, the poet is exceptional anywhere.]
9. The efficacy of eloquence lies in its effect upon the listener.
10. Peter Viazemskii.

Letter to Ivan Iakushkin, October 30 (1838)

1. Published in Gershenzon edition (I, 208-213) as a letter to A. I. Turgenev. But Dmitrii Shakhovskoi proved that it was in reality a letter of October 30, 1838 to Iakushkin. (See Shakhovskoi "Iakushkin i Chaadaev" in *Dekabristy i ikh Vrem'ia,* 193-194).
2. Iakushkin's article "Shto Takoe Zhizn?" (What is Life?).
3. Chaadaev criticizes Iakushkin's views about the essential difference between church teaching and science. He attributes Iakushkin's mistakes to the fatal influence of the 18th century Enlightenment.
4. For example, that of Pierre Ballanche (1776-1846), the French religious thinker.

Letter to Princess Sophia Mescheskaia, May 27 (1839)

1. Turgenev Archives, Academy of Sciences, no. 2677 published in the Gershenzon edition (I, 235-238). The manuscript has the title "Two Letters to Princess Sophia M" (the second letter in the series follows after the letter to Gagarin of 1840 in our book). Concerning Meshcherskaia see Letter of May 1, 1835 to A. I. Turgenev.
2. Ivan Iakushkin's views. See the previous letter of 1837 to him.

Letter to Ivan Gagarin, October 1 (1840)

1. Gagarin archive, Box A, Bibliothèque Slave, Centre d'Etudes Russes, Meudon, France. Copy in the Shakhovskoi archive 334-322, published in MRT, 36. Prince Ivan Sergeevich Gagarin (1814-1882), diplomat at the Russian Mission in Munich from 1833 to 1835. Chaadaev sent Pushkin a copy of his "First Philosophical Letter" via Gagarin. (See Gershenzon edition, I, 198). Gagarin left Russia in 1843 to become a Catholic and a Jesuit. In writing to Iurii Samarin about his own conversion to Catholicism Gagarin revealed: "The foundation of it was laid by Peter Iakovlevich Chaadaev on Basmannaia Street in 1835 or 1836..." Gagarin Archive, Letter to Samarin dated January 18-30, 1866, Slavic Library, Center of Russian Studies, Meudon, France. Gagarin later became the first editor of Chaadaev's works when he published *Oeuvres Choisies de Pierre Tchaadaïev* (Paris-Leipzig, 1862).
2. Ivan Pavlovich Galakhov (1809-1849) friend of Herzen, Ogarev and Granovskii.
3. Countess Anastasia de Circourt, born Khliustina, wife of Count Adolphe de Circourt. She wrote articles in French about Russian literature.
4. Part of the western provinces of the Russian empire suffered a famine in 1840.
5. Shakhovskoi suggests that this is a veiled reference to the forcible conversion of the Uniates to the Russian Orthodox Church.

Letter to Princess Sophia Meshcherskaia, December (1841)

1. Turgenev archive 2677, published in the Gershenzon edition (I, 240-243). Concerning Meshcherskaia see Letter of May 1, 1835 to A. I. Turgenev.

Letter to Ivan Gagarin, October 1 (1842)

1. Gagarin archives, Box X, Meudon. Published in the *Oeuvres Choisies* (Paris 1862), 207-208. Gagarin's own commentaries on this letter are "This note is not without importance. The totality of Chaadaev's ideas led him not to admit that Russia might have had a Catholic past. When I spent my last sojourn in Moscow, I spoke to him about the marriage of Princes Anna, daughter of Iaroslav the Great to Henry I, king of France, without indicating any supposed change of religion or the factor of a mixed marriage. From this followed the necessity of recognizing that Russia and France belonged to the same church at that time. Chaadaev did not immediately react, but the next day or the one after it he wrote me the letter which one has just read." (*Oeuvres Choisies* 207-208).
2. Anna Iaroslavna, daughter of Iaroslav the Wise (or the Great), wife of Henry I, king of France and mother of king Philip I. She died in 1075.
3. Iaroslav the Wise (978-1054), Grand Prince of Kiev between 1019 and 1054. He married Irene-Ingegerde, daughter of the Swedish king. His sons sought western European women for marriage; only his third son married a Byzantine princess. His three daughters became queens, one of Norway, another of France, as noted above, and a third daughter married the king of Hungary. Maris, a sister, became the wife of the Polish king.
4. Nestor (c.1056-after 1113) author of the "Chronicle of Past Times" according to tradition, but today is considered a compiler.
5. Isiaslav Iaroslavich (1024-1078) Grand Prince of Kiev, eldest son of Iaroslav the Wise, married the daughter of Boleslas II, king of Poland. After the death of Iaroslav he ruled in Kiev. Chased out of Kiev by his own brothers, he appealed to Pope Gregory VII (Hildebrand) to mediate his dispute with his brother Sviatoslav (1073). In 1075 Iasiaslav went to Rome and put the Russian lands under the protection of St. Peter. Isiaslav, in seeking to secure his throne, appealed several times to the Pope, the Polish king and the German emperor for help; finally in 1077 Isiaslav secured the throne only to die in 1078.
6. Antonia Rimlianina was Saint Anthony the Roman (1067-1147). He left his rich Roman parents and friends in order to take refuge in the desert, according to tradition. Navigating to Novgorod supposedly "on a rock," he founded a monastery on the shores of the Volkov river. He died on August 13, 1147. The ruins of the monastery of Saint Anthony the Roman are still evident at Novgorod today.
7. A letter written in Greek by John II, metropolitan of Kiev (1077-1088) to the anti-pope Clement III concerning doctrinal differences between the western and eastern churches.
8. Sesviatskoie - a village near Moscow, situated near the Triumphal Gate of the Peterburgian highway near Moscow. The name comes from the Church of All Saints there.

Letter to Schelling (1842)

1. First published in the Longinov article in *Russkii Vestnik* November, 1862, 159 ff., republished in the Gershenzon edition (I, 244-246).
2. Schelling's letter of 1833 to Chaadaev.
3. The Prussian king Frederich-Wilhelm invited Schelling to occupy the chair of philosophy at the University of Berlin during the autumn of 1841.
4. The Slavophil and the official Nationalist movement.

Letter to Madame E. A. Sverbeeva, July 10 (1842)

1. Shakhovskoi Archive 334-381, published in Russian translation by Golitsyn in *V. E.* April 1918, 240-243; MRT edition, 84-85.
2. Catherine Aleksandrovna Sverbeeva (1808-1892) born Princess Shcherbatova, was an intimate friend of Chaadaev. Her salon was one of the intellectual centers of Moscow; Chaadaev read two of his "Philosophical Letters" there in 1836. (See Gershenzon edition, I, 196). Alexander Turgenev called her "Recamier-Sverbeeva" after the famous Madame Recamier who organized one of the leading salons in Paris. (*O. A.* 195, 206).
3. Rozhestveno: the Shcherbatov property in the Serpukhov region of the Moscow district.
4. Sinaniary or Sinamary: Chaadaev called his aunt's property of Alekseevskoe by this name.
5. Countess Evdokiia Petrovna Rostopchina (1811-1858) born Sushkova, a poetess, and wife of Andrew Fedorovich Rostopchina (1813-1892) son of the famous governor of Moscow since 1833.
6. In his article "About Rural Conditions" which appeared in the sixth issue of *The Muscovite* in 1842 Khomiakov referred to two ancient Muscovite institutions, the ordinary village commune (mir) and the repartitional commune (polovnichestvo).
7. Xavier Marmier (1809-1892) French writer who journeyed to Russia in 1842 and wrote a travel book *Letters Concerning Russia, Finland and Poland* (Paris 1843).
8. The quotation is Chaadaev's French translation. See A. Khomiakov *Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenii III*, Moscow, 1911, 64 for the original Russian quoted later in this letter.
9. Catherine Nikolaevna Orlova (1797-1885) born Raevskaiia, a friend of Pushkin and Chaadaev, wife of Michaael Orlov who died March 14, 1842.
10. Prince Alexander N. Golitsyn, patron of Alexander Turgenev.
11. Natal'ia Shakhovskaia.
12. Elizabeta Shcherbatova.
13. Perhaps a daughter of Princess E. P. Dolgorukova (1800-1863) born Golitsyna, wife of Prince Paul Petrovich Dolgorukov (1787-1845).

Letter to Michael I. Zhikharev (1842)

1. Pypin archive 250-519 (old no. 3435-5) copy in Shakhovskoi archive 334-330 and 335; MRT edition, 85.
2. Natal'ia Shakhovskaia.

3. Reference to Khomiakov's article "On Rural Conditions."
4. Alexander Sergeevich Menshikov (1785-1868), admiral and diplomat, future commander-in-chief during the Crimean War.
5. Stepan Petrovich Shevyrev (1806-1864) writer, critic and professor of literature at Moscow University, exponent of the Doctrine of Official Nationality. Together with Pogodin he published the *Moscovitianin.*

Letter to T. (Alexander Turgenev) (before 1843)

1. Pypin archive 250-538 (old no. 3475-1 and 3476-3). Copy in Shakhovskoi archive 334-402; MRT edition, 87-92, the Russian translation by Shakhovskoi was published by L. N. Chertkov in *Russian Literature # III* (1969) 118-123, and republished in the Tarasov edition, 259-266; the original French text was first published by Raymond McNally in *Studies in Soviet Thought* 1986, 332-339. Alexander Ivanovich Turgenev (1784-1845), writer, literary intermediary between the Russian intelligentsia and Europe. The second son of Ivan Petrovich Turgenev. After studying at Moscow Univesity he entered the Archives of Foreign Affairs in 1800. Towards the end of January 1802 he went to Petersburg and in July left Russia to study in Germany at the University of Göttingen for two years. Upon returning to Russia in 1806 he got a post at the Ministry of Justice. From 1806 to 1824 he worked in various governmental jobs. He was a friend of Pushkin, Karamzin, Zhukhovskii, and P. A. Viazemskii. July 8, 1825 upon his doctor's advice Alexander Turgenev left for Europe where he lived all his life, aside from trips to Russia. He knew Goethe, Humboldt, Walter Scott, Lamartine, Chateaubriand, Victor Hugo, Balzac and Schelling. Alexander knew Chaadaev since 1820.
2. The allusion is to Madame Catherine Sverbeeva, though Zhikharev transcribes "Monsieur" rather than "Madame."
3. On March 23, 1843 Madame Sverbeeva wrote to Chaadaev that she had received "a monstrous letter from our friend T." which she attributed to the degenerate influence of his "Parisian existence." She sent a copy of the letter to Chaadaev (Lenin Library, Manuscript Section, Fond 102 - no. 1032-57. Concerning the quarrel between Turgenev and Chaadaev see Gershenzon, (I, 247).
4. Chaadaev's characterization of Alexander Turgenev is almost the same as that written by Viazemskii, *op. cit.* 333-335.
5. Prince A. N. Golitsyn (1773-1844), Turgenev's patron, Procuror-in-Chief of the Holy Synod and then Minister of Public Education. He was forced to resign in 1842 and so was Turgenev soon after that.
6. A reference to Turgenev's philanthropic aid for prisoners which Viazemskii and others ridiculed.
7. The death of E. A. Zubova, a dear friend of Madame Sverbeeva, took place on August 17, 1843.
8. Like many of his contemporaries Turgenev often accused Chaadaev of being vain.

9. Chaadaev refers to his ideas expressed in "The First Philosophical Letter": "If we wish to provide ourselves with an attitude similar to that of other civilized people, we must, in a way, repeat the entire education of humanity in our land." (See Rouleau edition, 51).
10. In his "Apologia of a Madman" Chaadaev declared that even before Peter the Great wished to make Russia a part of Europe "over three hundred years ago Russia aspired to become fused with the West." (See Rouleau edition, 201).
11. The "historical school of jurisprudence" founded by Friedrich Karl von Savigny (1779-1861) which identified the law of nations with their traditions and their *Volksgeist*. Slavophil ideas were close to those of this "historical school."
12. Chaadaev deplored the influence of Hegelianism, "this elastic philosophy" on the Slavophils.
13. In several of his articles and in his July 1848 letter to Tiutchev Chaadaev referred to the Russian inclination towards submission and sacrifice.
14. See Karamzin. *History of the Russian State*, Vol. I, St. Petersburg 1842, 132.
15. Compare these words with those in the October 19, 1836 letter of Pushkin to Chaadaev in which he wrote: "It is Russia, it is its immense expanse which absorbed the Mongol conquest. The Tatars did not dare cross our western frontiers and turn their backs on us. They retired into their deserts, and Christian civilization was saved... Are not the wars of Oleg and Sviatoslav and even the appanage wars like this life of bubbling adventure and sharpened aimless activity which is characteristic to the youth of all people? The Tatar invasion is a great, sad story. The awakening of Russia, the development of her power, her march toward unity (Russian unity, of course), the two Ivans, the sublime drama begun at Uglich and terminated at the Ipatief monastery - what, is all that not history but a pale, half-forgotten dream?" Pushkin never sent this letter of October 19th to Chaadaev but on December 15 he read it to Alexander Turgenev. It is very probable that Turgenev communicated the contents to Chaadaev, since the words here sound like a reply not only to the Slavophils but also to Pushkin (See Pushkin's *Works* Vol X, 866). In the authoritative academic edition *Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenii* in 16 volumes, Moscow, Leningrad 1937-1949, letters 1267 and 1267a. For commentary see V. E. Vatsyro, *Pushkin.Pis'ma iz Poslednnykh Let, (Pushkin. Letters of his Last Years 1834-1837*), Leningrad, 1969, 486-87.
16. Ivan IV "the Awesome" was married seven times in violation of orthodox religious practices. His illegitmate son, Dmitrii, killed at Uglich in 1591 was born from his last wife, Maria Nagoi.
17. In 1564 Ivan IV left Moscow for the Alexandrovskaia Sloboda, a village about 60 miles from Moscow where there was a monastery. The boyars and the people begged him to return to Moscow. He did but began in February 1565 the *Oprichnina*, a kind of special part of his realm housing his personal guards. This reform was accompanied by a reign of terror.
18. Chaadaev refers to Khomiakov's article "Concerning Rural Conditions."

19. The quotation is exact.
20. In his "Second Philosophical Letter" Chaadaev insisted upon the important differences between Russian and European serfdom. In a letter dated March 1820, Nicholas Turgenev recalled conversations with Chaadaev about serdom in which Chaadaev blamed it on governmental actions. (*R. A.* 1872, 1205-1207).
21. As the great Russian historian Vasilii Kliuchevskii put it "the history of Russia is the history of a country which colonized" Kliuchevskii, *Sobranie Sochinenii* Moscow, 1956, I, 31.
22. Ironic reference to Ivan IV the Terrible who issued decrees limiting the movement of Russian peasants.
23. Tsar Fedor Ivanovich, son of Ivan the Terrible became tsar in 1584 but real power rested with the boyar Boris Godunov who was later elected tsar in 1598. See Chaadaev's Letter of 1844 to Khomiakov. (Gershenzon edition, I, 248-249).

Letter to Count Adolphe de Circourt, Jan. 15 (1845)

1. Pypin archive 250-528 (old no. 3457-2) another version in Russian translation in *V. E.* July 1874, 91-95 and also there in 1900, 472-476; MRT edition, 102-106. Gershenzon published a version close to the one here (Gershenzon edition I, 253-258; his Russian translation appeared in his edition II, 244-249, republished in the Tarasov edition 272-276. Adolphe Marie-Pierre, Count of Circourt (1801-1879) French diplomat, writer. Entered Ministry of Interior in 1822 and in 1830 the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, but quit in that same year after the July Revolution of Louis Philippe. He went to Geneva where he met Madame Khliustina, born Tolstoia, and married her daughter Anastasiia in September, 1830. They lived in Italy for three years and in 1835 undertook a long trip to Germany and to Russia. They then set up fixed residence in Paris by 1837 and had a salon frequented by strangers. Along with Alexander Turgenev Circourt was the one to whom Chaadaev liked to write about his philosophical views. Circourt published "Tableau de la littérature russe" in the *Revue française et etrangère* in 1838 and "Lettres sur un voyage en Prusse et en Russie in *Bibliothèque Universelle* in 1844.
2. Chaadaev translated Filaret's sermon for the sanctification of a church in Moscow given on December 23, 1843; part of it was published in the September 25, 1844 edition of the French Catholic periodical *Le Semeur*. (See the letter of M. I. Zhikharev to A. N. Pypin, January 25, 1876 in the N. K. Pisanov collection 496-3-13, Institute of Russian Literature, Moscow). Filaret, Vasilii Mikhailovich Drozdov (1782-1867), archbishop of Moscow after 1826.
3. During the winter and spring of 1844-1845, Prof. S. Shevyrev presented a series of public lectures on Russian literature.
4. See Herzen's commentaries (Herzen, *op. cit.*, II, 118).
5. Alexis Khomiakov and Ivan Kireevskii supported the same idea. (See I. Kireevsky *Sochineniia*, I, 113).
6. The Russian Primary Chronicle recounts the legendary coming of the Apostle St. Andrew to Russia.

Letter to Princess Sophia Meshcherskaia, Apr. 2 (1845)

1. (Written after the winter of 1844 due to mention of Filaret whom Chaadaev met in the winter of 1843-44) Pypin archive 250-519 (old no. 3449-18).
2. Catherine Orlov.
3. Michael Orlov.
4. Catherine Orlov.
5. Michael Orlov who died on March 19, 1842.
6. Catherine Orlov.
7. Probably the Englishman Thomas Evans.
8. Alexander Turgenev.
9. Schultz became the owner of the former Levashev mansion after the death of Madame Levashev.
10. Chaadaev spoke about his portion of the Levashev mansion on a "pavilion" but only when he wrote in French.
11. Filaret: Vasilii Mikhailovich Drozdov (1782-1867) archbishop of Moscow and Kolomna as of 1826. Chaadaev's biographer Michael Zhikharev recorded that "Chaadaev must have become acquainted with the archbishop during the winter of 1843-1844, and they spontaneously became friends. Conversations about the Roman Church were left out and most of the time they especially spoke about Protestanism. Chaadaev took on the task of translating Filaret's sermon concerning the sanctification of a church in Moscow into French. When the translation was completed, it was published in the *Semeur*." Letter of M. I. Zhikharev to A. N. Pypin, January 25, 1872, N. K. Piksanov Collection 496-3-13, IRLI. See Chaadaev's letter of January 15, 1845 to Circourt above in which Chaadaev thanks Circourt for having sent him a copy of the *Semeur* with the printed sermon in it.

Letter to Count Adolphe de Circourt, Apr. 26 (1846)

1. Pypin archive 250-528 (old no. 3457); MRT edition, 110-112.
2. Alexander Turgenev who died December 3, 1845.
3. Like Circourt, Chaadaev was very opposed to the regime of Louis Philippe ever since the take-over in July, 1830. See his letter of 1833 to Turgenev (Gershenzon edition, I, 170-173) and his letter to Pushkin (Gershenzon edition, I, 165).
4. Chaadaev's opinion about the need for an aristocracy as intermediary in any constitutional monarchy was very close to Montesquieu's views about France expressed in his *Spirit of the Laws*.

Letter to Adolphe de Circourt, June 15 (1846)

1. Pypin archive 250-528 (old no. 3457) published by Gershenzon in another version and without a date (I, 268-275); a Russian translation appeared in the Tarasov edition 278-284; MRT edition, 112-117.

2. Chaadaev translated Khomiakov's article "The Opinions of Foreigners about Russia" which had been published in Russian in Volume IV of the periodical *Moscovite* in 1846.
3. Nicholas Aleksandrovich Melgunov (1804-1867) writer and intermediary between Russia and the West.
4. Aleksandrovich Danilovich Menshikov (1673-1729), a favorite of Peter the Great, ruled *de facto* under Catherine I (1725-1727) the surviving wife of Peter the Great and also at the outset of the reign of Peter II. He was banished in 1727.
5. Peter II, emperor of Russia (1727-1730) but the Dolgorukis, Menshikov's enemies, really governed. "The ancient metropolitan of Russia" refers to Moscow, the capital under Peter II.
6. Ernst-Johann Biron or Biren, lover and political favorite of Empress Anna Ivanovna (1730-1740).
7. Elizabeth I, daughter of Peter the Great, Empress of Russia (1741-1761).
8. Catherine the Great (1762-1796)
9. Socrates, church historian called The Scholastic, born in Constantinople about 379, died in 440. He continued the *Church History* of Eusebius and recounted the period from 306 to 439 A.D.
10. St. Anthanasius, illustrious Church Father, born about 295 in Alexandria, died in 373. He wrote his *Apologia* to Emperor Constance as a reply to accusations made against himself. Constance II, Roman emperor, born in 317, died in 361; he meddled in theological controversies and was essentially a caesaropapist.
11. Theodosius the Great (c. 346-395), Roman general in Spain, became eastern emperor in 379; he fortified the Christian religion as the official Roman state religion.
12. St. Ambrose, Latin Father of the Church, archbishop of Milan, born at Treres around 340, died in 397. Ambrose forbade Emperor Theodosius from entering Milan Catherdral after the emperor's massacre in Thessalonica in 390 and admitted the emperor to communion only after a lengthy repentance.
13. [See what Metropolitan Platon says in his history of our church concerning the introduction of Christianity into our country.]
14. Compare these ideas with those in Chaadaev's 1843 letter to Alexander Turgenev, where Russian history was described as a series of "acts of submission and servitude followed naturally from that Russian historical tendency toward abdication."
15. During the reign of Alexis Romanov (1645-76) the Law Code of 1649 formalized serfdom and Patriarch Nikon in effect shared the throne with the tsar.

Letter to Count Adolphe de Circourt, June 15 (1846)

1. Pypin Archive 250-528 (old no. 3457), published by Gershenzon, (I, 268-276) in the slightly different version translated here.
2. Khomiakov's "Mnenie inostrantsev o Rossii" (The Opinion of Foreigners about Russia), published in Vol. IV of the periodical *Moskovitianin* in 1845.

3. Nikolai Aleksandrovich Melgunov (1804-1867) writer and intermediary between Russian writers and the West.

Letter to George Samarin, Jan. 29 (1847)

1. Pypin archive 250-537 (old no. 3473) copy in the Shakhovskoi archive 334-432; MRT edition, 119-121. Published as a letter of November 15, 1846 "to an unknown" in a different version in the Gershenzon edition, I, 276-278. Russian translation appeared in the Gershenzon edition (II, 265-267), and was republished in the Tarasov edition, 284-286. Iuri Samarin (1819-1876) leading Slavophil. He met Khomiakov and Ivan Kireevskii at Chaadaev's apartment (Gershenzon edition, I, 408). For an analysis of Samarin's ideas see Walicki, *op. cit.*, 300-304.
2. Gogol, *Selected Extracts from My Correspondence with Friends* published January 1, 1847. In a letter dated April 29, 1847 Chaadaev expressed similar views about Gogol's book (Gershenzon edition, I, 279-285.
3. In a letter to Chaadaev dated January 6, 1847 Viazemskii indicated that he wanted to write something about Gogol's book (*Starina i Novizna*, I, 1897, 208-209). His article entitled "Iazykov - Gogol" appeared in the *Saint Petersburg News* April 24-25, 1847 (See Gershenzon edition, nos. 90-91, I, 412). Viazemskii characterized Gogol's book as "useful and needed." (See Viazemskii *Estetika i literaturnaia Kritika* Moscow, 1984, 173). Viazemskii's article also appeared in *Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenii kn. P. Ia. Viazemskogo*, II, 303-304.

Letter to P. A. Viazemskii, Apr. 29 (1847)

1. Published in Russian in the Gershenzon edition, (I, 279-285) Chaadaev evidently followed his usual practice of having the letter recopied and circulated before Viazemskii received it, since Viazemskii asked to see it in February, 1848. (*Starina i Novizna*) (Old and New) , Vol. I, 1897, 210).
2. K. D. Kavelin.
3. *Selected Passages from Correspondence with Friends* was just published.
4. Prince V. V. Lvov, the censor, to whom Gogol wrote a letter about his book (See *Letters of N. V. Gogol* (Pisma N. V. Gogolia) edited by V. I. Shenrok, Vol. III, 420).
5. N. F. Pavlov who wrote several "Letters" to Gogol, which were just published in *The Moscow News* (Moskovskie Vedomosti).
6. Your brochure refers to Viazemskii's articles published as "Iazykov and Gogol" just published in *The St. Petersburg News* (nos. 90-91, 1847) and evidently sent together as an offprint or brochure.
7. The poet F. I. Tiutchev.

Letter to Fedor Ivanovich Tiutchev, May 10 (1847)

1. Pypin archive 250-543 (old no. 3483-28), copy in Shakhovskoi archive 334-404 published in Russian translation by Shakhovskoi in *Literaturnoe Nasledstvo* XIX-XXI, 1935, 587-589 republished in the Tarasov edition, 290-292 in

French by Francois Rouleau in *Plamia* no. 68, Oct. 1985, Meudon, France, 43-44; MRT edition, 121-122. Fedor Ivanovich Tiutchev (1803-1873) famous Russian poet was born on his family property at Ustug, about 200 miles from Moscow. After tutoring in French, Russian orthodox piety and patriotism at home, he entered Moscow University in 1819. After completing his studies he entered the diplomatic service in 1821. From 1822 to 1837 he worked at the Russian embassy in Munich. He left diplomatic service in 1844 and returned to Moscow. Tiutchev and Chaadaev were friends especially after 1844. Concerning Chaadaev Tiutchev wrote: "The man whom I contradict the most is the one I love best" (Zhikharev *V. E.* 1871, 40, no. 1). He and Chaadaev had often heated discussions. Chaadaev loved to debate Tiutchev especially at the English Club in Moscow, where once the debate got so heated that the head waiter rushed to separate them, since he feared that they might come to blows. Tiutchev was a perfect foil for Chaadaev, a Slavophile poet with philosophical insights. Ivan Gagarin called Tiutchev "an orthodox Joseph de Maistre" (Kirill Pigarev *F. I. Tiutchev i ego vremiia* Moscow, 1978, 318). Since Tiutchev had spent twenty years abroad, Ivan Aksakov called him "a Russian emigrant from Europe."

This letter reflects Chaadaev's severe psychological crisis which began in 1846. He fell into a deep depression, hypochondria and even contemplated suicide. See Richard Tempest "Chaadaev and Tiutchev" *Studies in Soviet Thought* Vol. 32, no. 4, (1986) 383-395. Chaadaev's letter circulated in society, but in February, 1848 Viazemskii had still not received it himself and asked Chaadaev for it. (See *Starina i Novizna*, I, 1897, 210.

2. Tiutchev acknowledged receipt of Chaadaev's portrait in a letter dated April 13, 1847 (R.A. X(1900), 411-412).
3. Viazemskii's article "Iazykov -- Gogol" appeared on April 24-25, 1847 in the *Sanktpetersburgskie Vedomosti*, (See Gershenzon edition, I, 279-285).
4. An ironic reference to the polemic between Granovskii and Khomiakov about the Burgundians and the Franks. Chaadaev viewed the entire debate as a tempest in a teapot. See the note of Shakhovskoi in *Literaturnoe Nasledstvo* XIX, 1935, 592.
5. The decision of Frederich Wilhelm, king of Prussia, to convene the *Landtag*.
6. Reference to Khomiakov's position as the head of the Slavophils.

Letter to Michael Zhikharev (1847)

1. Pypin archive 250-518 (old no. 3432-1); MRT edition, 122.
2. Perhaps Chaadaev's letters to Vigel or those to Alexander Turgenev.

Letter to Michael Zhikharev (1847 or probably 1848)

1. Pypin archive 250-518 (old no. 3432-16) Shakhovskoi copy 334-338; MRT edition, 123-124. In the Gershenzon edition see "The only bit of good in the world is goodness" (Gershenzon edition I, 319). Since Chaadaev generally only put the day and the month on his letters, Zhikharev must have added the tentative year here. The cholera epidemic began in May 1848, so this letter should

probably be dated 1848 according to the MRT edition. In the course of the epidemic in Moscow, some 59,000 people got sick and 27,917 died.
2. Zhikharev's trip to Europe begun on August 7, 1847.
3. Ironic reference to the Zhikharev property where Michael Zhikharev spent his summers.
4. Perhaps a note from Sverbeeva or from the Marquis de Custine.
5. Michael Zhikharev's brother Matthew was born in April 1829, so he was about eighteen years of age in 1847.

Letter to Princess Catherine Aleksandrovna Dolgorukova, Jan. 22 (1848)

1. (The first of "Two Letters Concerning Religion"). Pypin archive 250-522 (old no. 3445-7) and archives of S. T., K. S. and A. S. Aksakovykh 3-20-117; MRT edition, 125-128. Russian translation published by Richard Tempest in *Voprosy filosofii* XII (1983) and the French original in *Studies in Soviet Thought* 32-4 (1986). Shakhovskoi identified "Princes D" as being Ekaterina A. Dolgorukova, (1803-1852) wife of the Decembrist Ileia Andrevich Dolgoruky (1798-1848). (See Shakhovskoi introduction to the 'Philosophical Letters' in *Literaturnoe Nasledstvo* XXII-XIV, 1935, 9.) The differences between the Pypin copy and that of the Aksakov archive are minimal. The Aksakov copy is signed "Michel Chirpounofsky," a mock reference to the fact that Chaadaev's brother lived on the Khirpunovo property in the Nizhnii Novgorod region. Chaadaev's letter appears to be an answer to Tiutchev's article "The Papacy and the Roman Question." Tiutchev referred to the events of 1849 in Rome when in January of that year under the leadership of Garibaldi and Mazzini the Republic was proclaimed leading to the intervention of the French expeditionary force in July. Tiutchev's article was written in October of 1849 and published in the *Revue des deux Mondes* in January, 1850. Chaadaev probably read it in an earlier version.
2. St. John 18.36.
3. At the council of Florence on July 6, 1439 the western Roman Catholic and the eastern Byzantine Orthodox Churches were reunited. Among the signers were the Pope Eugene IV, the Emperor of Constantinople John VII, the Patriarch of Constantinople Joseph II, and the archbishop of Moscow, Isidore of Kiev. But it had no practical effect.
4. This phrase refers to Tiutchev's article "The Roman Question" published in the *Revue des deux mondes* in 1849. Chaadaev read the manuscript before it was published. In it Tiutchev wrote "Jesus Christ said 'My Kingdom is not of this world;' well then, one must question why Rome, after becoming separated from the unity, believed that it had the right to organize a kingdom of Christ like a kingdom of the world in terms of an interest which it identified with the very interest of Christianity as a whole." (Bykov edition, 354). See Richard Tempest "Chaadaev and Tiutchev" *Studies in Soviet Thought* Vol. 32, no. 32, November 1986, 382-395.

5. Patriarch Nikon who asserted the superiority of the church over the state in Russia during the reign of Alexis Romanov (1645-76).
6. The theme of "the kingdom of God on earth" is at the heart of Chaadaev's thinking. See Rouleau edition 45, 46, 58, 62, 89, 148, 186, 199, 273. The phrase the "Thy Kingdom Come" (Adveniat regnum tuum) from the Lord's Prayer is cited at the outset of "The First Philosophical Letter', 'The Apologia of a Madman', and in many other of his works and letters.
7. Peter II (Peter Petrovich) of Montenegro (1813-1851) prince-bishop was consacrated at St. Petersburg in 1830.

Letter to Sergei Poltoratskii, May 30 (1848)

1. Pypin archive 250-536 (old numbering 3470 and 3472-21); MRT edition, 129-130, published by Peter Scheibert in *Zeitschrift für Slavische Philologie XXVIII* (1959), no. 1, 56-58 where the letter is dated 3 May 1848. Sergei Dmitrievich Poltoratskii (January 23, 1803-January 7, 1884) famous bibliophile and friend of the poet Pushkin and Chaadaev.
2. Poltoratskii ordered ten lithograph portraits of Chaadaev in Paris and sent six copies to Chaadaev (See Viazemskii's letter to Chaadaev dated February 11, 1848 in *Starina i Novizna.* See also V. V. Kunin *Bibliophiles of the Pushkin Era* (Bibliofily pushkinskoi pory) Moscow, 1979, 218-219).
3. The February Revolution of 1848 in Paris.
4. Leverrier (1811-1877) astronomer who discovered a new planet Neptune by calculation; here the reference is to Peter the Great.
5. Count A. A. Zakrevskii (1796-1865) See below Letter of January 15, 1854 to Circourt.
6. The "Shcherbatovs" refers notably to A. G. Shcherbatov (1777-1848) governor general of Moscow from 1844 to his death in 1848, and also his second wife Sophia Stepanova, née Apraksina.
7. Monsieur Jourdain, the main character in Molière's play *Le bourgeois gentilhomme*, who ironically spoke in prose without being conscious of that fact until he was told so.
8. Catherine Muravieva (1771-1848), mother of the Decembrists Nikita and Alexander.
9. Sophia Muravieva (1826-1892) called familiarly "Nonushka." After the Russian government officially took away noble titles from her father Nikita, the family name was changed to Nikitin.
10. Elie Mikhailovich Bibikov (died in 1861).
11. Famous penal colony in Australia; the reference here is to Siberian exile. Sophia Muravieva was born in Chito, Siberia.
12. E. I. Iakushkin (1826-1905), later became a jurist and ethnographer.
13. Especially his father Ivan D. Iakushkin (1793-1857) the Decembrist. See above Letter to Iakushkin, May 2, 1836.
14. On Schelling see above "Fragments and Thoughts".
15. Circourt see Letter of January 15, 1845 to Circourt.

Letter to an Unknown (Fedor Tiutchev) July (1848)

1. Pypin archive 250-553; MRT edition, 131-133, published in Russian translation by Shakhovskoi in *Literaturnoe Nasledstvo*, XIX-XXI, 1935, 589-590, republished in the Tarasov edition, 294-296.
2. Tiutchev's article "Russia and the Revolution" dated April 12, 1848 was published in Paris in 1849. Chaadaev read it during the summer of 1848 before its publication. It first circulated as a memorandum to Nicholas I; but the tsar did not like it and would not allow it to be published in Russia.
3. "For a long time there have been only two real powers in Europe: Revolution and Russia...The life of one is the death of the other." (P. Byrov edition, 1913, 344).
4. "The Russian people are Christian...It is this capacity for renunciation and for sacrifice which forms the very basis of its moral nature." *Ibid.*
5. According to Chaadaev, Peter the Great had the approbation and support of the Russian people.
6. In "Russia and the Revolution," Tiutchev held that Nicholas I was the sovereign in whom Russian thought was incarnated.
7. In 1589 under the reign of Fedor Ivanovich, Boris Godunov arranged that the chief of the Russian Church receive the title of Patriarch.

Letter to Princess Catherine Dolgorukov, Oct. 6, 1850

1. Second Letter to Princess D. in the series of "Two Letters to Princess D. concerning Religion." Pypin archive 250-522 (old no. 3445-2); MRT edition, 149-152, published in Russian translation in *Simvol* no. 20, 1988. An anonymous criticism of this letter is in the Gershenzon editon, (I, 373-77).
2. Henri-Auguste-Georges, marquis de la Rochjaquelin (1805-1867), French politician. Elected deputy from Morbihan in 1842, he became one of the leaders of the legitimist party who wanted to reconcile monarchy with the sovereignty of the people. After the Revolution of 1848 he rallied to the cause of the Republic, was re-elected deputy from Morbihan, sided with the legitimists and protested against the *coup d'état* by Louis Napoleon in 1851.
3. Famous passage from the sermon of "Petit Carême" by Massillon (1663-1742) in 1718; Louis XIV was nine years old.
4. Reference to the Church Council of Constantinople held in 381 (the Second Ecumenical) when the Creed became traditional in the Church, the so-called Nicene Creed.
5. Pope Leo III (795-816) is the one who crowned Charlemagne emperor of the West.

Letter to Vasilii Andreevich Zhukovskii (1851)

1. Manuscript Section, Lenin Library, 1032, published in Gershenzon edition (I, 295-298). Vasilii Andreevich Zhukovskii - famous Russian poet, tutor of young Alexander II, heir to the throne.
2. Concerning Bulgakov see Letter to A. I. Turgenev (1835).
3. Fanny Esler - dancer in Moscow at the outset of 1851.

4. Konstantin Aksakov -- the Slavophil, wrote a drama entitled "Osvobozhdenie Moskvy v 1612." (Liberation of Moscow in 1612) which was performed on stage on December 14, 1850.
5. Peter the Great.
6. On December 14, 1850 the day when Aksakov's play was performed, an anonymous review appeared in the newspaper *Moskovskie Vedomosti* (Moscow News). Chaadaev easily recognized that the anonymous author of the review was the famous Slavophil Konstantin Aksakov himself.
7. E. P. Rostophchin wrote an article and some verse dated February 18, 1851 upon the departure of Fanny Esler the dancer.

Article concerning the coup d'etat of Napoleon III (1851)

"1851"

1. Pypin archive contains several versions 250-286; 250-554 (old no. 3496-39) and 250-555 (old no. 3494-40). Copies in the Shakhovskoi archive 334-266 and 334-269 (the first version is the longer one); MRT edition, 158-162.
Peter Scheibert published a Russian version of the text, (translated by Zhikharev) in "Neue Texte von Petr Iakovlevic Caadaev" *Zeitschrift für slavische philologie* XXVII, no. 1 (1959), 413-415. The French text was published by François Rouleau in *Plamia*, no. 68, October 1985, 45-48. Scheibert points out some convergences between the critical views of Chaadaev and those expressed by Karl Marx in his article "The Eighteenth of Brumaire of Louis Napoleon" published in May 1852 (See Scheibert, *op. cit.*, 51). The Russian text was republished in *Voprosy filosofii*, no. 6., 1988, 115-119.
The nephew of Napoleon I Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte (1808-1873) elected President of the Republic, on February 10, 1848, led a *coup d'état* on December 2, 1851. On January 14, 1852 he was appointed President of the Republic for a decade. On December 2, 1852 Louis-Napoleon became Emperor of the French with the name Napoleon III. Since Chaadaev does not refer to this last fact, his article was probably written at the end of 1851 or during 1852.
2. Richard Cobden (1804-1865) English economist and politician, advocate of free trade who predicted the abolition of war through the use of juridical courts of arbitration and warned England not to become politically involved in international conflicts.
3. Pierre Carlier (1792-1858) prefect of police in Paris after Louis Napoleon because President in 1848.
4. J. P. Proudhon (1809-1865) famous socialist and anarchist who for a short time portrayed Louis Napoleon as the incarnation of the social revolution in his "The Social Revolution Demonstrated by the Coup d'Etat of December 2" published in Brussels in 1852.

Letter to Michael Zhikharev, Nov. 1 (1853)

1. Pypin archive 250-518 (old no. 3432-7); MRT edition, 169-170.

2. Reference here to Chaadaev's sojourn in England in August 1823. From Yarmouth he went to London to spend 4 days and then to Brighton, the fashionable spa where he took to the sea waters.
3. A place presumably in Moscow.
4. See the *Fragments* "Fallen in England, etc." In the English county of Sussex, in which Brighton is located, Chaadaev stayed in a cottage there.
5. Ignace Pleyel (1757-1831) Austrian composer, naturalized French citizen, student of Haydn.
6. Caroline of Brunswick (1768-1821), wife of George IV, king of England, who started unsuccessful divorce proceedings against her for adultery, after he came to the throne. This led to a scandalous trial in 1820.
7. Tilbury - a light, open, one-horse carriage popular at the time. Its name came from that of its English inventor.

Article for *L'Univers*, Jan. 15 (1854)

1. Pypin archive 250-552 published in Russian translation by Shakhovskoy in *Zven'ia* (III-IV), (1934) republished in the Tarasov edition, 318-323, and in French by Francois Rouleau in *Cahiers du monde russe et soviétique* XV (3-4) 1974, 409-413; MRT edition, 173-176. Chaadaev wrote this article for the French Catholic journal *L'Univers*. He liked expressing his critical opinions about as if he were a foreigner. Furthermore, as Shakhovskoi suggests the very title may refer to Chaadaev's views as "not nationalistic but worldwide, i.e., universal."

Russia's failures during the Crimean War severely affected Chaadaev. One month after the fall of Sevastopol, according to D. N. Sverbeev in a letter to his wife, "This is what Chaadaev says, and I don't think that he lied. As you know, he is now in close relations with Zakrevskii and was once at his place with (A.F.) Orlov. The latter asked him after a long conversation, "Well, what do you think, Chaadaev, how will it end?" Chaadaev answered, "Russia will remain a second-rate power for a long time because of it." Orlov and Zakrevskii in unison replied "Perhaps forever." ("Letter of D. N. Sverbeev to E. A. Sverbeeva, Sept. 29/Oct. 1, 1855," Bartenev Diary, 385, 390).

Chaadaev placed a great deal of emphasis upon Russian serfdom, especially in his "Second Philosophical Letter" and his letter of 1843 to Alexander Turgenev. To Chaadaev the origins and the continuation of serfdom in Russia were at the very core of Russia's problems. Russian expansionism was paid for at the price of extending its form of slavery.

Two weeks before his death, having seen Alexander II at Zakrevskii's place, Chaadaev was in a black mood and did not look forward to anything good from the new tsar. "Look at him" Chaadaev said pointing to Alexander II, "it's basically horrible for Russia. That stupid expression, those wandering eyes!"

Chaadaev's attitude in this article is as pessimistic as the "Philosophical Letters." His intellectual life had come full circle. Here he again criticizes Russia not only for being an intellectual vacuum, a "tabula rasa" as contrasted

with the rich history and culture of Europe, but also its leading principle of slavery represents a threat to Europe.
2. This idea is very characteristic of Chaadaev (see his letter of May 20, 1842 to Schelling, Gershenzon edition, I, 245, and his "Apologia of a Madman" *Ibid*, I, 228). Chaadaev refers to the "retrospective utopias" of the official nationalists and of some of the Slavophils. Ballanche referred to Joseph de Maistre as "a prophet of the past" (prophète du passé) and Viazemskii compared the "Slavophils or Russophils" to "archeological liberals." Like Joseph de Maistre, they belonged to the past. (Viazemskii *Aesthetics and Literary Criticism*, Moscow, 1984, 343).

Four Fragments

1. Pypin archive 250-556 (old no. 3498); MRT edition, 177. Reference to the Crimean War dates these fragments after September 20, 1854, the arrival of the French army in the Crimea, and the defeat of the Russian army on the Alma river.

Letter to Count Adolphe de Circourt, Jan. 15 (1854)

1. Pypin archive 250-528 (old no. 3457-13); MRT edition, 178-180. In this text are ideas expressed in the *Fragments* and also in the January 15, 1854 article for *L'Univers*. The work is a profound satire full of irony, concerning the politics of tsar Nicholas I.
2. The *coup d'état*: that by Louis Napoleon on Dec. 2, 1851.
3. The "Noble Boarding School" (blagorodnii pansion).
4. From 1797 to 1801 Vasilii Zhukovskii (1783-1852) had been a student in that boarding school, and he was a tutor to the future tsar Alexander II. He died in April 12/24, 1852. Reference here is to the repressive measures taken by the secret committee of April 21 and the rigorous censorship imposed after the revolution of 1848.
5. In 1853 former Kievan general governor, General D. G. Bibikov (1792-1870) replaced Lev Alexandrovich Perovski (1792-1856) as minister of internal affairs. The "coalescence for the great national unity" is an allusion to the forcible incorporation of the Uniates into the official state orthodox church.
6. Abraham Sergeevich Norov (1795-1869) named Minister of Public Education in 1853.
7. Reference to the "Third Section" (the secret police) and its chief from 1844 to 1856, Alexis Fedorovich Orlov (1768-1861).
8. Arsenii Andreevich Zakrevskii(1786-1865) son of an impoverished noble inspector general from 1815 to 1823, governor general of Finland (1823-1831), made count in 1830, military general governor of Moscow (1849-1859). Only half-literate all his life, according to Delvig, Zakrevskii treated people like a despot and tended to "get involved in family matters for the reconciliation of husbands with their wives and children with their parents... In a word, Zakrevskii acted like a good proprietor on his estate." Delvig *Polveka russkii zhizn* (A Half a Century of Russian Life) II, 11-14.

Chaadaev exercises his usual irony here: Zakrevskii was married to Agratina Fedorovna, born Tolstoi (1799-1879). Their daughter, Countess Lydia Nesselrode (1826-1884) was infamous for her innumerable love affairs, according to Delvig *op. cit* II, 94-95.
9. Reference to the Directory 1795-1799 between the French Revolution and Napoleon: the epoch of the marvelous and the unbelievable.

Letter to Michael Zhikharev (1854)

1. Pypin archive 250-518 (old no. 3435-1), (1854) copy Shakhovskoi archive 334-330; MRT edition, 181.
2. The crisis over the "Eastern Question" and the resultant Crimean War (1854-1856). It was Tsar Nicholas I who branded the Ottoman Empire as "a sick man" (See the *Parliamentary Papers. Accounts and Papers* Vol. XXXI, pt. 5, *Eastern Papers*, p. 2, Sir G. H. Seyman to Lord Russell, January 11, 1853, "We have on our hands a sick man - a gravely sick man" *Oxford Dictionary of Quotations* 3rd ed. (1980), 362.

Letter of an Unknown to an Unknown (Female)

1. Pypin archive 250-556 (old no. 3498-41); MRT edition, 182-183. The original was found among the papers of Catherine Nikolaevna Orlova, widow of Chaadaev's close friend Michael Orlov. Gershenzon published another version (I, 309-310) and his Russian translation (II, 280-282) was republished in the Tarasov edition, 305-307. Gershenzon claimed that this letter was part of an essay entitled "Concerning Political Life in Russia" which circulated in St. Petersburg in 1855 and was attributed to Chaadaev. (See the Gershenzon edition, (I, 424) and the memoire of Senator K. N. Lebedev in *Russkii Arkhiv* (1893), no. 3, 285-286).
2. Reference to Tiutchev's idea that the Russian empire was the inheritor of the Byzantine and Roman empires and hence had the mission of absorbing all the Slavs.
3. Copernicus - discovery of "a poor little solar system."
4. Even though the Slavophils supported the ancient principle of autocracy and wanted no participation of the Russian people in political decision making, the goverment was suspicious of them. After the publication in 1852 of the Slavophil *Collection* by Ivan Aksakov, the government forbade any further Slavophil publications. Furthermore, Aksakov, who had begun dressing like a common Russian peasant, was forbidden from doing so any further. He was also compelled to shave off his beard, since the government considered it unsuitable for a nobleman.
5. The text was thus written after the debarkation of the allies in the Crimea; the battle of Alma on Sept. 20, 1854.

Letter to Michael Zhikharev, Nov. 3 (1855)

1. Written before September of 1855, Pypin archive 250-519 (old no. 3435-7), copy in Shakhovskoi archive 334-330; MRT edition, 185-187.

2. Chaadaev liked to play the role of pedantic grammarian in some of his letters to his nephew Michael Zhikharev.
3. The goverment or possibly Zakrevskii, governor-general of Moscow.
4. Shevyrev or Pogodin.
5. Zhikharev's mother.

Letter from Ardatov to Paris (between 1844 and 1855)

1. Pypin archive 250-558 published in *Voprosy filosofii* , no. 6, 1988, 112-115; MRT edition, 188-190. The article is another example of Chaadaev's irony; his brother Michael resided in the village of Khripunova in the Ardatov region of Nizhnii-Novgorod.
2. [Ivan Vasil'ev.(ich) Kireevskii]. Ivan Kireevskii tried to obtain governmental approval to accept the post of editor of the journal *Moskovitianin* (The Muscovite) but without success. Nonetheless, he did accept the function of editor without the title and edited the first three issues in 1845 until the government forbade further publication.
3. [Aleksei Step.(anovich) Khomiakov].
4. Citation from Khomiakov's article "Concerning the Peasant Condition" published in 1842 in issue 6 of the *Moskovitianin*, which Chaadaev often quoted in his letters. (See A. Khomiakov *Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenii* (Compelte Edition), Vol, III, Moscow, 1911, 64.
5. Quotation from the Russian "Chronicle of Past Times" the so-called Nestor Chronicle.

Aphorisms and Diverse Remarks (1855)

1. Pypin archive 250-551 (old no. 3493-36) first published by Raymond McNally in the *Forschungen zur osteuropäischen Geschichte*, vol. 25, Berlin, 1978, 217-218 and partially by François Rouleau in *Plamia*, vol. 65, 1984, 21-30. The Shakhovskoi translation was published in *Voprosy Filosofii* 1, January, 1986, 121-124 and republished in the Tarasov edition, 161-170. The Zhikharev translation into Russian was published in *Simvol* no. 15, 1986, 274-284. The Shakhovskoi translation appeared in *Voprosy filosofii*, I, 1986, 121-124 and reappeared in the Tarasov edition, 161-170; MRT edition, 191-198.
2. Count Joseph de Maistre (1754-1821) Savoyard philosopher, a leading Ultramontanist. From 1806 to 1812 de Maistre was sent by the Sardinian king to St. Petersburg. He supported papal infallibility and advocated the use of the pope as an arbitrator in the international affairs of Europe.
3. Reference to David Strauss' *Life of Jesus (Das Leben Jesu)*. See the letter to Turgenev, Gershenzon edition, I, 194.
4. According to Zhikharev these words refer to Chaadaev's arch enemy Philip Vigel. (Zhikharev "Chaadaev." *V. E.* Article II, 23, note 1.

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